

OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK THE COMPELLING CASE - PART I





CONTENTS

CLIENT:

HILL STREET HOLDINGS

TEAM:

GREEN PARK LAND COMPANY

SPACE STRATEGY

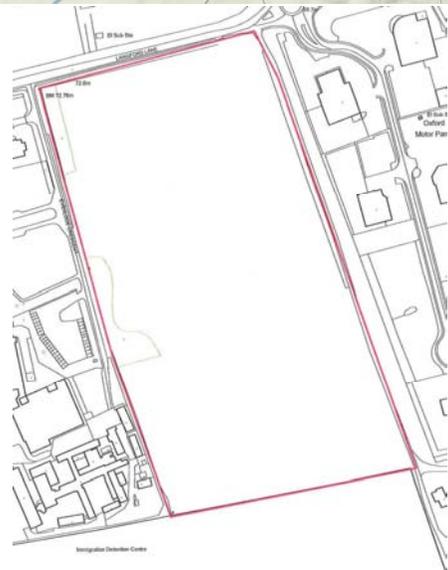
PETER BRETT ASSOCIATES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i In this report we set out the current evidence base in support of the release of 6.5 hectares (16 acres) of land at Langford Lane, Kidlington, to create approximately 23,200 sq m (250,000 sq f) of B1(b) research and development space at Oxford Technology Park. We believe that the economic development case is compelling; and cannot be delivered elsewhere within southern Cherwell in the short to medium-term.
- ii Our intention is to promote Oxford Technology Park through Cherwell District Council’s emerging Core Strategy, only submitting a planning application in the event that we receive sufficient support from key stakeholders.
- iii We would welcome feedback.



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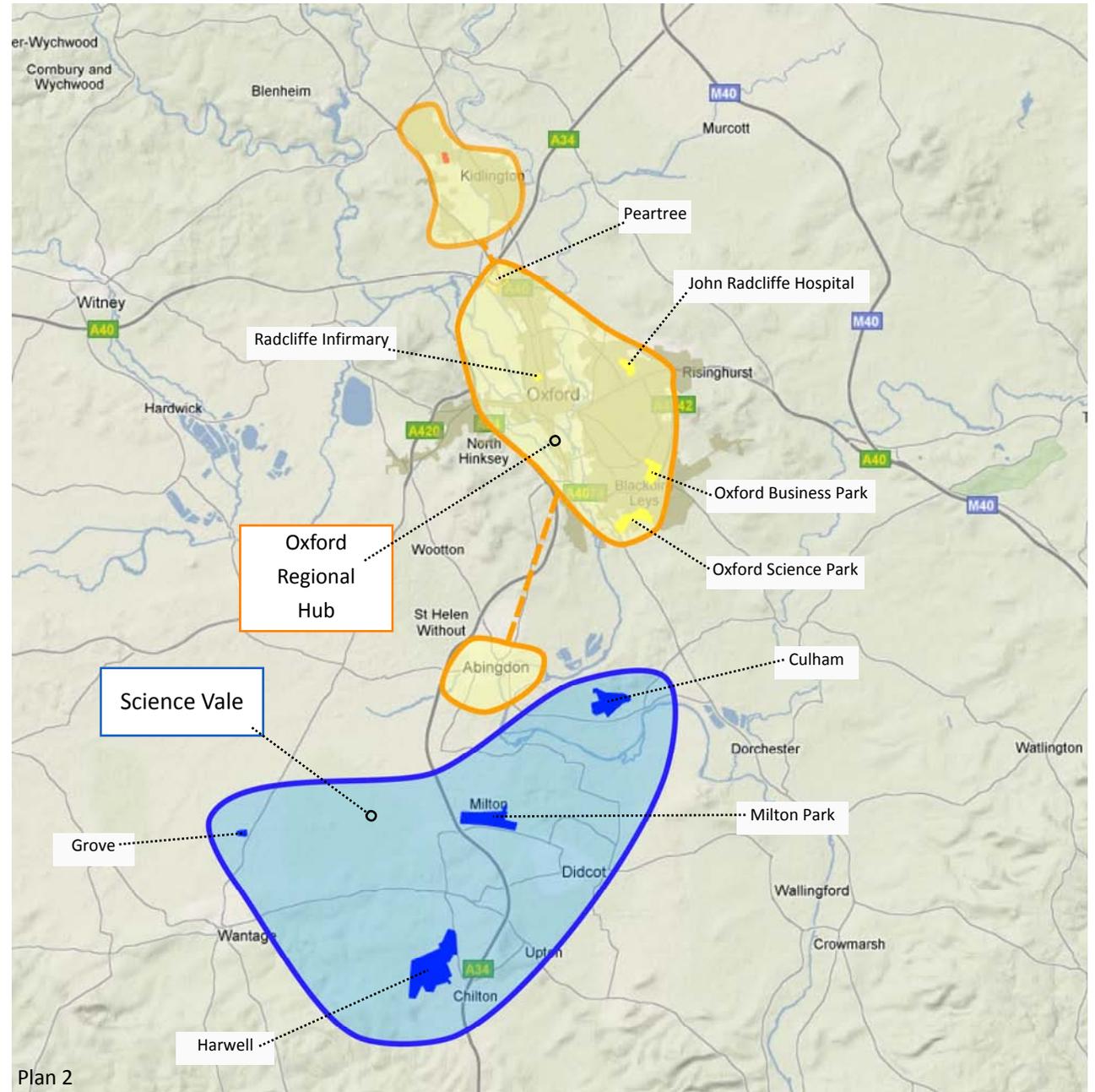
INTRODUCTION

- 1 This document strengthens the evidence base for Cherwell District Council’s emerging Core Strategy, with the objective of securing support, in principle, for the allocation of Oxford Technology Park for research and development purposes.

- 2 The site comprises 6.5 hectares (16 acres) of Green Belt land, lying between the Campsfield Detention Centre and the Motor Park (see Plan 1). The site has direct access onto Langford Lane almost opposite the main entrance to London Oxford Airport. The land is owned freehold by a joint venture between LEA Investments and Green Park Land Company.



Plan 1

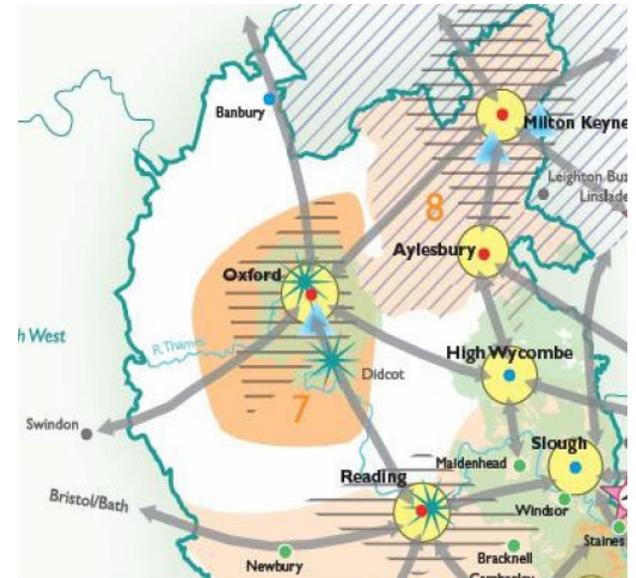


Plan 2

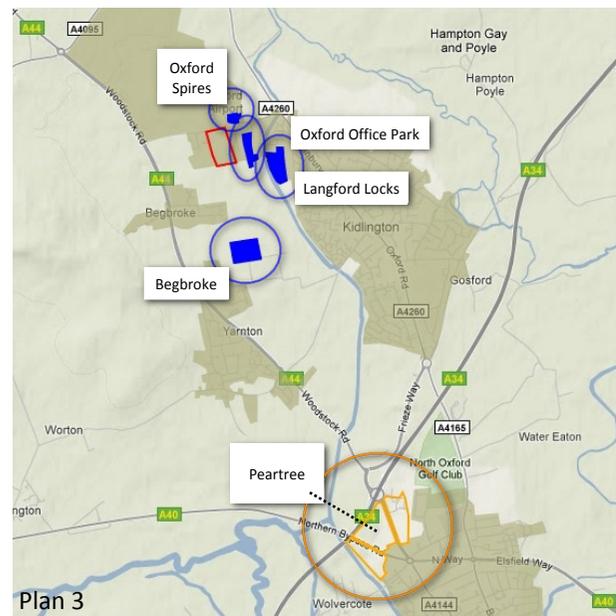
3 Oxford Technology Park has the potential to create approximately 23,200 sq m (250,000 sq f) of B1(b) research and development space. This will deliver approximately 1250 direct jobs and substantial economic development advantages, connecting the southern part of Cherwell District with the internationally renowned research, entrepreneurial and academic capabilities of Oxford. These advantages have, to date, largely established themselves to the south of the city; at Oxford Science Park, Oxford Business Park, plus Milton Park, Culham, Harwell and Grove – the latter comprise the so called ‘Science Vale’ (see Plan 2). Efforts are now being made to rebalance growth northwards, with proposals within the city at Peartree, the Radcliffe Infirmary and the John Radcliffe Hospital, with Bicester further afield. Outside of the

city boundaries, the most meaningful high value-add economic assets in the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area to the north, comprise the University of Oxford’s Begbroke Science Park and London Oxford Airport; with ancillary accommodation at Oxford Spires Business Park, Oxford Office Park, and Langford Locks (see Plan 3).

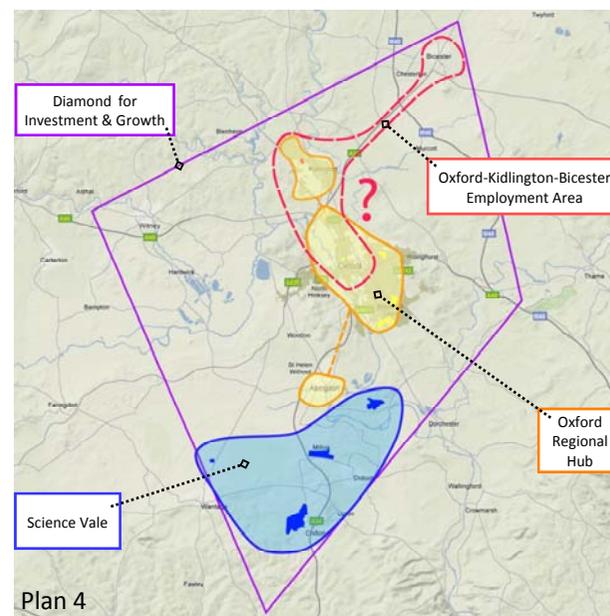
4 Oxford is the dominant economic force within the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area (see Plan 4). The city lies at the heart of one of the most important economic clusters in the United Kingdom and its spin out benefits are felt throughout the county, and beyond (see Plan 5). However, these spin out effects are not uniform, and there is a complex set of interrelationships between each aspect of the cluster. It



Plan 5: Extract from SE Key Plan Diagram



OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK THE COMPELLING CASE



Plan 4

is well established, for example, as evidenced in this report, that the research and development activities of the University of Oxford tend to manifest themselves within a very short distance of the originating academic centres and faculties. Not surprisingly, because of its proximity and critical mass of economic assets, Kidlington has a very close relationship with this core zone; defined in the South East Plan as the 'Oxford Regional Hub' (see Plan 5). Bicester's relationship with this Hub, regrettably, is very limited, despite more than 20 years of structure plan prioritisation. Such shortcomings are compounded by the fact that Kidlington has a large shortfall in employment land supply. Bicester has approximately 80 years supply (URS *Employment Land Supply for Cherwell*, 2006).

⁵ We are not promoting a case for a massive employment land release at Kidlington. Just enough to meet existing needs – 16 acres is a very modest proposal, which will help to retain an appropriate, sustainable balance of opportunities in the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area. Nor are we promoting a major Green Belt review. There is sufficient support for Kidlington in the Regional Spatial Strategy; and policies in this strategy do not preclude a modest, localised amendment of the Green Belt boundary around Langford Lane.

⁶ In short, the potential of Kidlington needs to be planned for, now, in a purposeful way. A failure to do so will rapidly stifle Kidlington's potential, leading to a sub-optimum, disjointed and ultimately unsustainable economic strategy for the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area.



VISION, MISSION & VALUES

1 The 'smart growth' embodied in Oxford Technology Park is at the heart of all national and regional guidance on economic development because this type of development generates the largest number of spin out benefits (in terms of employment and productivity) for the fewest impacts. In this sense, it is the most sustainable form of economic development, lying at the heart of, and driving, all conventional models of sustainable place.

Vision & Mission

2 Our vision for Oxford Technology Park is of a place where pure, academic science takes its first steps towards commercialising and manufacturing products that serve high value, specialist needs.

3 We believe the arguments set out in this document substantiate the case for Oxford Technology Park being supported in Cherwell's Core Strategy, either through text, or a specific allocation.



Values

4 The following five core values will guide the way we operate throughout the lifetime of this project.

- **Sustainable development:** delivering a successful, modern economy for Cherwell. This is the most crucial step towards achieving the wider environmental, social and good governance aspects of sustainability
- **Partnership working:** aligning public sector strategies with academic, business and market drivers. In other words - joined up delivery.
- **High quality design in a managed environment:** providing 'best in class' property to attract and retain 'best in class' companies.
- **A focus on technology:** reflecting the fact that we are dealing with a special place, for special occupiers. We fully expect any planning permission to include a user restriction.
- **Critical mass:** Helping Kidlington achieve its true potential by maximizing the benefits associated with the emerging critical mass of vital assets in the locality, thus complementing and reinforcing the growth ambitions for Bicester.

THE COMPELLING CASE

1 Kidlington has the potential to grow more and in doing so the town will benefit from this growth. Parts are in need of regeneration, yet the town has the locational advantage of having established links to Oxford's knowledge economy; with various schemes delivered to date in two broad phases of development, in the early 1990s and early 2000s. This growth area is located on the north-west side of Kidlington, around London Oxford Airport and Begbroke Science Park, the former providing an important gateway to Kidlington.



2 Oxford Technology Park is key to the success of Kidlington. It needs to be considered in the wider context of its contribution to the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area wherein all three settlements are encouraged by policy to be mutually reinforcing; in time, extend the Oxford Regional Hub to Bicester and bringing this 'Country Town' truly into touch with the benefits available in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

3 The compelling case for Oxford Technology Park is that it is a modest scale, relatively short-term knowledge economy development opportunity, which plays a very important, catalytic role in the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area. It is entirely consistent with the ambitious growth aspirations for Bicester; in fact, it is mutually reinforcing, with very few negative impacts. On balance, Oxford Technology Park can make an important contribution to the sustainable development of Oxfordshire.

Site Description

4 The site was once the home of Gosford All Blacks Rugby Club. The pavilion has now been removed, leaving an area of hard standing. The sports pitches have not been used for 10 years.

5 As former sports pitches, for more than 40 years, the land has very little ecological or agricultural value. Equally, the land does not contribute significantly towards the openness of the Green Belt (as it is surrounded on three sides by development) and it is too



small to serve any purpose as a strategic gap or as a valuable feature in the open countryside. There are no views to or from the site that merit protection.

6 The site has an existing, direct access on to Langford Lane, with good visibility splays. Langford Lane joins the dual carriageway part of the A44 at a traffic controlled junction (which has spare capacity).

7 The decision of Cherwell District Council to grant planning permission for the nearby Begbroke Science Park on 14 February 2002 provides a precedent decision, with comparable "very special circumstances". It is worth noting that the Secretary of State wrote to the District Council on 27 March 2002 declining to call in the decision and stating that he "is satisfied that the

issues raised do not relate to matters of more than local importance" which could therefore be more appropriately determined by the local planning authority: i.e. upholding the importance of local decision making, not least with regard to Green Belt matters.

Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area

8 Bicester's economic development is considered by some to be "on the cusp of change". This view is not supported by promoters or occupiers of office and R&D accommodation, as evidenced by very low take up rates for B1 space in Bicester. Moreover, it is very difficult to see what might drive such a transformation of Bicester. The town suffers from major infrastructure constraints (including Junction 9 of the M40), its labour force is not well aligned with knowledge economy skills, and the higher education offer is limited (there is no University of Bicester). There is, in addition, limited brownfield land. In short, an economic development strategy that deploys a singular focus on Bicester cannot succeed; worse still, it will stifle Kidlington, which is recognised as a regionally and locally important employment area, well-connected to Oxford's knowledge economy.

9 The key to success lies in a balanced growth strategy for the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area. This would reflect the basic life cycle model of ideas and innovation within the Oxford Regional Hub (as per Diagram CO1 of the adopted Regional Spatial Strategy - see Plan 7), spinning out to first production and commercialisation at Oxford Technology Park, with next

stage growth and second order functions scaling up in Bicester.



Plan 7: Extract from Regional Spatial Strategy

Evidence Base

10 Our aspirations to deliver Oxford Technology Park have been given a significant boost by the publication of the South East Plan on 6 May 2009. This plan, which, as the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is formally part of the development plan for Cherwell, now raises Kidlington broadly to the same status as Bicester (albeit with smaller scale growth ambitions), Paragraph 22.9 states.

"Spatially, economic growth will need to be delivered alongside other housing, social and environmental developments throughout the sub-region. In particular, regard will be had to the following considerations. Within Oxford the overall aim will be to achieve a broad balance between housing and jobs by protecting, as appropriate, existing sites and allocating new land suited to providing for a range of opportunities in accordance with Policy RE3. Options regarding the location, level and form of employment or other development, including the possible use of land at and in the immediate vicinity of the currently safeguarded land at Peartree, will be a matter for local determination. Land should not be released for employment to the north of Oxford [eg. Weston Otmoor] that could adversely affect the future economic buoyancy of Bicester, Kidlington or Witney..." [our emphasis]

11 The reference to Kidlington in this paragraph has been added by the Secretary of State following the findings of the EIP Panel's Report. The logic for this is plain to see, as evidenced by the Final Report by Ove Arup & Partners on the Western Otmoor Eco Town, published in January 2009.

12 This report provides the most up to date analysis of the Kidlington-Bicester economies. Paragraph 4.2.7 states:

"The Kidlington economy has strengthened, reflecting its proximity to Oxford, the airport and a better image than Bicester".

13 Paragraph 4.7.5 goes on to state that:

"Bicester's current lack of engagement in science and technology sectors (and in particular with spin out activity from Oxford) arises for a number of reasons... this perception issue would need to be bridged to enable the knowledge economy to take off in Bicester. If it is not, then a more appropriate role for Bicester might be as a supplier to the knowledge economy, one tier down".

14 We concur with this view and would add, from paragraphs 4.8.7 and 4.8.11:

"Although Bicester has available office space, the offer is dated and does not meet the current requirements and, further, that rental values are not high enough to justify further investment in existing stock"... and "Historically, Bicester's location has favoured B8 development. It forms a significant element of the employment land take up and market pressures for this type of use are strong".

15 These sentiments stand in stark contrast to Ove Arup's findings on Kidlington. Paragraphs 5.2.8, 5.2.13 and 5.2.14 state:

"The vision for Kidlington builds on its relationship with Oxford, being a quality centre for office and laboratory based businesses especially in the bio-technology sector and other spin-off activities. The strategy is to retain the aspects of village life that make up much of its attractiveness as a place to live".

"The University of Oxford has a desire to develop land around its existing activities at Begbroke Science Park to the west of Kidlington [i.e. immediately to the south of the Oxford Technology Park site] - although this land is in Green Belt." [our emphasis]

"The rationale for [Begbroke Science Park] was a desire to expand research activities that do not need to be located in central Oxford, in a less constrained environment [e.g. free of the Highways Direction on J9 of the M40]."

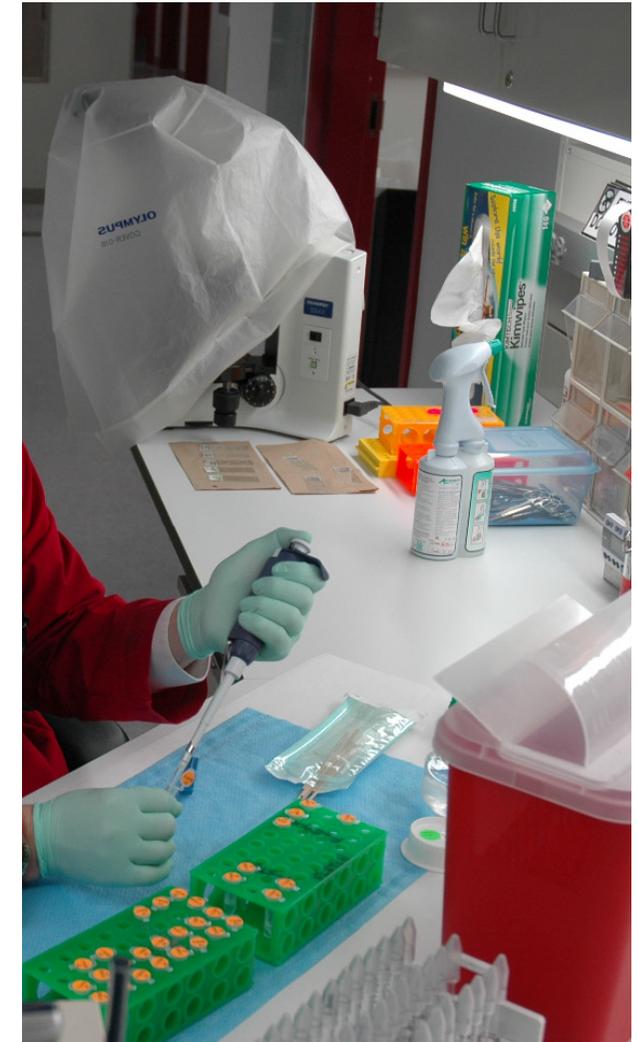
16 As if the point needed any further emphasis, paragraph 5.2.15 states that:

"The University does not have any firm plans to locate any of its activities in Bicester".

17 It is clear that the original, essential and most important element of the Oxford Regional Hub (i.e. the University) has committed to Kidlington. Other related elements of the Oxford knowledge cluster will continue to follow. This is entirely consistent with the Regional

Economic Strategy and, as above, planning policy in the adopted South East Plan.

18 These findings are of course also consistent with the Cherwell Employment Land Review (ELR), which concludes that:



"under the right conditions, growth in Oxford could lead to overspill in surrounding towns, such as Bicester and Kidlington".

19 However, the distinguishing factors between these two locations are:

- **Kidlington has the support of Oxford University, whilst Bicester has no university support and, in fact, a relatively low skills base.**
- **Bicester is congested and infrastructure constrained, Kidlington is not.**
- **Kidlington has a B1 (offices and laboratories) market, Bicester does not. Table 8.1 of the ELR shows that Kidlington delivered 1,832 sq m of offices per annum between 1994-2004 (i.e.1000 Jobs), whilst Bicester delivered only 736sq m (i.e. 400 jobs). Moreover, Bicester's employment completions were dominated by warehouses (4,532 sq m per annum), comprising 63% of employment take up.**

20 Cherwell District Council's Sustainability Assessment of the Issues and Options consultation identified a specific option "to encourage the growth of high technology, knowledge based and airport industries, building upon existing concentrations of such businesses". This option scored very highly both on its own merit and in comparison to other options. High technology scores very positively in terms of its low pollution and, given the location of Langford Lane, ALSO SCORES BECAUSE OF THE HIGH ACCESSIBILITY OF THE

LOCATION and proximity to a significant existing business cluster.

21 On the supply side, the ELR concludes that, for Kidlington, "the stock of year's worth of land supply is substantially less than what could be taken as a reasonable stock of allocated land to have for a development plan framework (i.e. 2006 to 2026)". We therefore consider it regrettable that the ELR records 14.7 ha for Bicester compared with 3.6 ha for Kidlington, which appears to have no relationship to the take-up and demand dynamics of these markets.



22 The Ove Arup Report concludes at paragraph 5.8.4 that:

"Kidlington does not have significant capacity for housing growth, but offers considerable potential for employment development, some of which is backed by the University of Oxford".

23 This evidence base on the demand and supply dynamics of the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area, and its economic development potential, merits a response from Cherwell District Council.

Planning Policy

24 In light of the above evidence, we consider that Cherwell's emerging Core Strategy should provide for Oxford Technology Park, by either;

- (A) Either in the form of a specific designation for B1(b) research & development accommodation;
- (B) Or, by ensuring that the Core Strategy is sufficiently specific about: the economic role and potential of Kidlington; and the need to provide an adequate supply of employment land in Kidlington for the plan period; thus, contemplating a specific Green Belt review in this area (or, perhaps if more pragmatism is required, recognizing in policy that the need to accommodate the knowledge economy is capable of providing the "very special circumstances" necessary to justify granting planning permission for modest knowledge economy development in the Green Belt).

²⁵ The approaches in (A) and (B) above are consistent with Policy SP5 of the RSS. This lists two regionally significant Green Belt reviews (one of which is in the Oxford Green Belt to the south of the city), but it also provides for “smaller scale local reviews.... pursued through the local development framework process”; which in turn is consistent with national guidance set out in paragraph 2.7 of PPG2: *Green Belts*. Policy SP5 goes on to state that these regional and local reviews should satisfy national criteria, accord with the RSS, and ensure that sufficient land is safeguarded to avoid the need for further review to meet development needs to at least 2031. This requirement to satisfy needs is now especially demanding for Oxfordshire and Cherwell given the legal challenge (and at best delay) to Oxford’s (southern) Strategic Development Area, the lack of County Council support for Oxford’s Northern Gateway (at Peartree), and the job numbers for Oxfordshire (18,220) and Cherwell (2,862) 2006-2016 set out in the South East England Partnership Board’s *South East Plan Supplementary Guidance: Employment Land Reviews* (July 2009). It is important, for the South East region as a whole, that these needs are accommodated. Any failure to do so would impact on the region’s wealth, employment and productivity prospects, therefore being contrary to the sustainable economic development policies set out in the RSS, notably:

- **Policy RE1: Contributing to the UK’s Long Term Competitiveness**, which notes the critical importance of the South East’s economy to the UK

as a whole, seeking to ensure that the spatial requirements for market flexibility are fully met.

- **Policy RE2: Supporting Nationally and Regionally Important Sectors and Clusters**, which states that;

“local authorities, through regular employment land reviews, combined with local knowledge and working with other partners, will identify the key sectors and clusters within their local area, and any opportunities that exist for the development and expansion of sectors and clusters”.

The RSS goes on to encourage various types of intervention at the sub-regional and local level, based on employment land reviews, local knowledge and research.

- **Policy RE3: Employment Land Provision**, which provides guidance on the supply of employment land. This policy states that;

“in preparing local development documents (LDDs), local authorities will have regard to strategic and local business needs and the relevant sub-regional strategy... As an input to the LDDs, local authorities will undertake employment land reviews working with adjoining authorities as appropriate, and in consultation with business interests”.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the Cherwell Employment Land Review (2006) could usefully be updated and, moreover, evolved to cover the

qualitative requirements of paragraphs 6.15 and 6.16 of the RSS:

“the region needs to offer a high quality portfolio of sites to meet the needs of growing sectors and to attract inward investment... to ensure that there is an adequate quantity *and* quality of employment land and a *range* of sites that can be adapted for a broad range of employment uses to meet the current and future requirements of local economies” [our emphasis].

- **Policy RE5: Smart Growth**, which seeks to increase the region’s prosperity while reducing its ecological footprint. Paragraph 22.8 of the RSS states that “part of the future success of Central Oxfordshire will rely on maximising the opportunities afforded by such Smart Growth”. Oxford Technology Park is an important part of this maximisation strategy (in concert with initiatives elsewhere, including Bicester).
- **Policy RE6: Competitiveness and Addressing Structural Economic Weakness**. In essence, this policy seeks a balanced approach, whereby “national, regional and local partners will actively seek to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of the most economically successful parts of the region and also address structural economic weaknesses to increase the economic potential of those areas which are under performing”. We believe that this balanced approach should apply

throughout the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area.

- 26 Such policies on planning for a sustainable economy lie at the heart of planning generally, but are also especially relevant to Central Oxfordshire. Paragraph 22.3 of the RSS sets out the twin challenges faced by Central Oxfordshire, namely how to:

“Harness the *unique potential* of the dynamic, innovative economy of the sub-region” [our emphasis]

- 27 and,

“Create and maintain a network of sustainable communities that meet future social and economic need and protect and enhance the environment”

- 28 With this in mind, Policy CO1 sets out the core strategy for Central Oxfordshire; striving to be a “world leader in education, science and technology by building on the sub-region’s economic strengths”. Whilst this policy states that, “the main locations for development will be Bicester, Didcot, and Wantage and Grove to improve their self-containment, and within and immediately adjacent to the built-up area of Oxford”. This does not preclude beneficial development elsewhere, including development in the Green Belt:

- Policy CO1 recognises that “elsewhere limited development will be permitted to support the

economic well-being of local communities”, so there is not a moratorium on growth elsewhere in the sub-region.

- Moreover, Kidlington clearly falls within the ambit of Policy CO1 as it is already benefiting from a location close to, and intertwined with, the unique potential of Oxford; and it is recognised (e.g. in the Ove Arup Report) as forming part of the network of sustainable communities, including Bicester, to the north of Oxford.

- Policy CO2 goes further by stating that;

“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” [our emphasis].

- 29 Such prioritisation needs to be reflected in Cherwell’s emerging Core Strategy – there is no support for a singular focus on Bicester, even if further employment land releases could be justified (based on B1 take-up rates and needs expressed through market mechanisms).

- 30 In short, the economic policies of the RSS may be restated, in our opinion, as **MANAGED GROWTH** in Oxford, **MANAGED POTENTIAL** in Kidlington, and **GROWING POTENTIAL** in Bicester. Co-ordination, and strong planning, provide the keys to success.

- 31 Whilst the economic case for Oxford Technology Park is compelling, and there is strong policy support for such economic development in Kidlington, this needs to be balanced against the context of Green Belt constraint. There are two key points. Firstly, paragraph 2.7 of PPG2 makes it clear that Cherwell’s Core Strategy can undertake a Green Belt review, either relying on paragraph 22.18 of the RSS, which sets out the regional (formerly structure plan) exceptional circumstances that now exist to justify a review taking place, or applying Policy SP5 (above) that provides for other “smaller scale local reviews.... pursued through the local development framework process”. In either event, on balance, the development of Oxford Technology Park is consistent with the objectives for the Oxford Green Belt, as set out in Policy CO4.

- 32 Finally, on the evidence base, it is worth emphasising that none of the arguments relating to Kidlington are new. They are well rehearsed in, for example, the EIP Panel’s Report into the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 (December 2004). Paragraph 2.19, whilst recognising Oxford as a world ranking economic and cultural focal point, states that “at the Country Towns, progress has been slower, suggesting that decentralising growth from Oxford is not at all easy to achieve”. In addition, at paragraphs 2.20 and 2.22 the Panel note that the Oxfordshire authorities have taken a “pragmatic” approach to development in the Green Belt (ie ad hoc applications determined on the basis of very special circumstances) and, with regard to employment development, conclude that “Green Belt constraints will

no doubt continue to tax the ingenuity and ability to compromise of both planning authorities and business”. This continuing situation, regrettably, does not lend support to the required plan-led approach to development planning in Oxfordshire 2031 – on the contrary, there is often a sense that the lack of a plan is used as a good reason to delay much needed development.

³³ All of this clearly points towards the need for some genuine, robust policy making - in accordance with the RSS (which now replaces the Oxfordshire Structure Plan).

³⁴ **Kidlington is an important regional economic asset, with a long over due role to play in the Central Oxfordshire Diamond for Growth. It is essential that the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area receives the same level of support and attention as Science Vale (located to the south of Oxford), thus balancing the unique potential of the Diamond as a whole. This will ensure that the area north of Oxford is allowed to benefit, helping to establish and reinforce a network of sustainable communities in southern Cherwell.**



NEEDS, CONCEPTS & EXAMPLES

1 A technology park is not a new concept, but it only works in certain locations and with the benefit of particular (often nebulous) economic assets. Oxford (and its environs) provides classic conditions for a technology park, as does Cambridge.

2 In fact, the so called "Cambridge Phenomenon" (SQW, 1985) predates and leads spatial planning in Oxfordshire, as evidenced by the large number of highly successful parks on the periphery of Cambridge, such as:

- Cambridge Science Park
- St John's Innovation Centre
- Cambridge Research Park
- Vision Park
- Granta Park
- Melbourn Science Park
- Genome Campus
- Babraham Institute
- Peterhouse Technology Park
- West Cambridge
- Iconix
- Addenbrookes 2020 (Medi-Park)

3 These parks provide exemplars, albeit that some are now more than 20 years old and, therefore, a little dated.

Needs

4 Technology Parks generally provide high quality buildings in a managed (campus-style) environment. They also meet a number of needs that are critical to their users, including:

- **Location** - accessibility to both the originating area of research (e.g. the Universities or hospital) and to national and international markets. Each successful location builds its own network of businesses, forming part of the wider cluster
- **Speed** - the knowledge economy tends to generate urgent and immediate needs. If a nearby supply of suitably located and consented employment land is not available then these high value needs are likely to be lost to the region forever.
- **Flexibility & certainty** - many of the buildings combine both production and research facilities.

The ability to easily secure grow-on space is critical in this innovative research market.

In many cases, such flexibility will require a particular design-solution; in the main, refitted older buildings are unlikely to provide appropriate space/ servicing requirements, nor can such buildings accommodate often stringent production requirements (e.g. with regard to temperature, humidity or sterility).

The buildings need to be mindful of the future needs of the next generation of spin out companies; they are therefore likely to be built specifically for known occupiers or a specific technology.

- **Costs** - specialist facilities need to be factored into each building's design and viability analysis.
- **Labour** - access to a well trained and motivated local work-force is essential.
- **Infrastructure** - power, telecommunications and accessibility are key.
- **Advanced business services** - spin-out companies need close access to functional expertise and support facilities - e.g. lawyers, accountants, business and marketing consultants, etc; generally located in Oxford. These non-spatial aspects of location are very difficult to plan for: some locations have the potential, others do not.
- **Government support** - the *Cambridge Phenomenon* reported positive support from both local and national Government (SQW 1985). Subsequent failure of the same was criticized in *Cambridge Phenomenon Revisited* (SQW, 1994) leading to the formation of Cambridge Futures (1997) AND CAMBRIDGE HORIZONS (2004) who continue to look at the expansion options for Cambridge including; doing nothing; using low-grade Green Belt adjacent to the city; and a series of necklace villages.; and the infrastructure implications.

5 Overall, the market provides the most efficient mechanism by which these needs can be expressed. As highly experienced developers, LEA Investments and Green Park Land Company are continuing to invest in Kidlington because we are confident that Oxford Technology Park can help to satisfy the above needs – and, in doing so, contribute meaningfully to the local economy and the spatial development of this important gateway.

Concepts for Kidlington

6 By extrapolating the various needs, and by looking at the advances already made in the Langford Lane employment area, it is possible to identify the functional concepts and the implications for Kidlington.

- **A catalytic exemplar** - The knowledge economy in Oxford continues to grow. Yet its stock of technology parks for spin-out ventures remains low; compared with the multitude of slightly older Parks in Cambridge. Within the optimum catchment for such technology parks there is an opportunity to develop world-class facilities, helping to redress the north-south imbalance of knowledge economy jobs in Oxfordshire; thus, in turn, reinforcing and underpinning the role of Bicester.

This is a once-only opportunity and there are few development sites in the Oxford environs that could deliver the same benefits.

In branding and reputational terms, Oxford Technology Park is a site with high potential; the prospects are good (given an expanding knowledge economy generally) and our proposed promotion timescale is aligned with emerging planning policy.

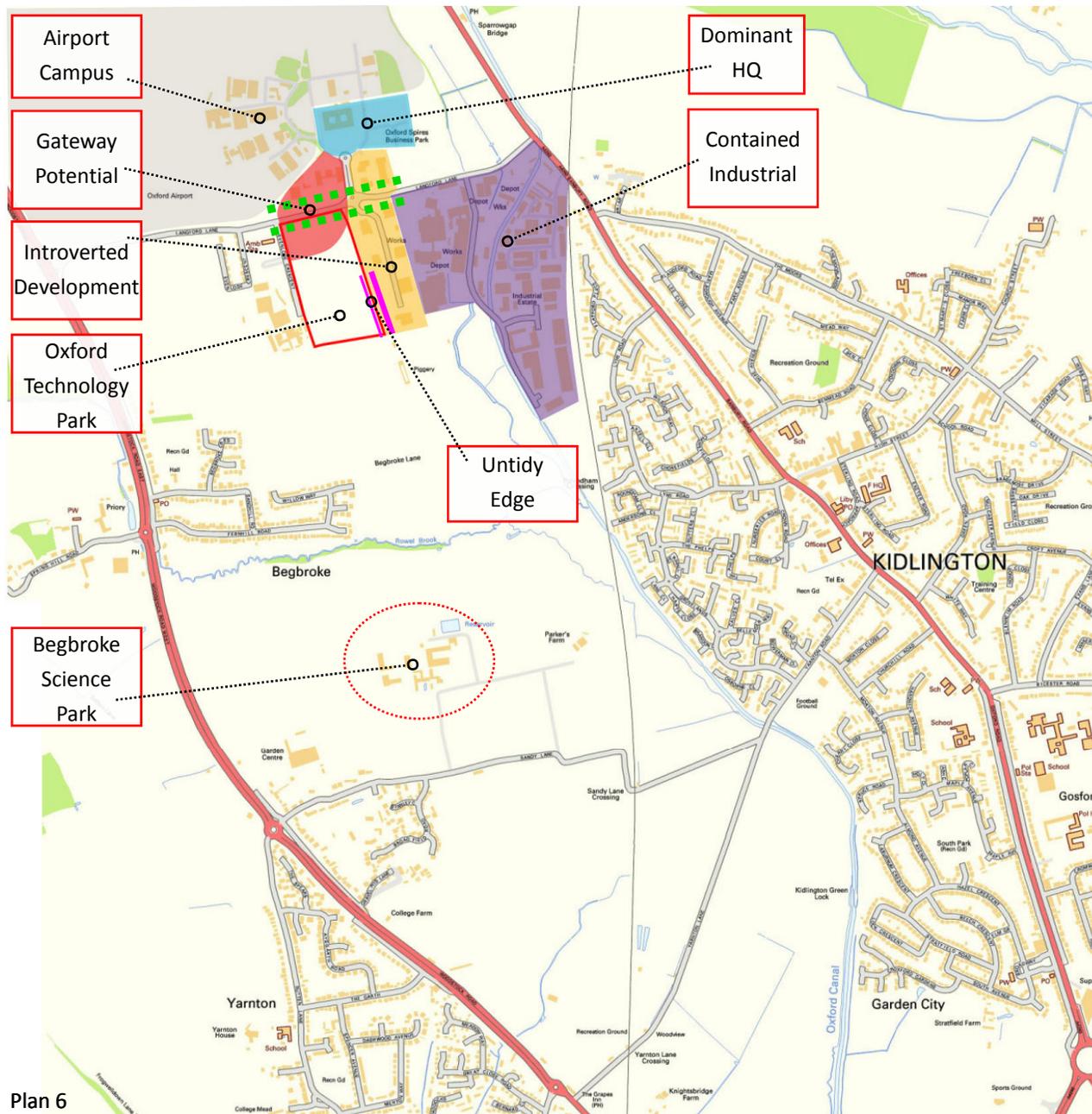
- **Appropriate buildings** - a 'seed' development, such as that possible at Oxford Technology Park, needs to deliver future-forward buildings. Follow-on benefits for Kidlington and thereafter across Cherwell will then be able to 'trade' off such landmark property in future regeneration. This development will act as a path-finder and magnet to other such development and renewal in the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area.
- **Community** - it is important that a vibrant community of innovators is created; a veritable hot-house of research and development. A particular 'sense of place' will have to be created to assist in this process. Obviously the arrangement of the buildings and their functional use will be important, with the landscape and urban-design of such a place and the virtual and physical management of the Park's identity critical.

To this end, it is important that the site has critical mass; that it is of an appropriate size to enable the same. It is also essential that the vision and ambition are not over-diluted by prejudicial development - obviously this requires both a strategic vision and a clear delivery plan.

To achieve the full catalytic effect, it is also essential

that such a site has prominence; as opposed to being tucked away behind older development.

- **Gateway to a new quarter** - if we are discussing the emergence of an area of Kidlington that could become regionally important in the future (including employment development at the adjacent airport), it is critical that this landmark Technology Park is prominent and well designed; providing an exemplar of sustainable science for all to notice. There is, in addition, the opportunity to help complete this important employment area by establishing a sense of arrival at this important gateway into Kidlington.
- **Ripple of advanced business services** - Kidlington has a stock of office accommodation in need of rejuvenation. Whilst these buildings may not be suitable for spin-out technology companies, they will certainly be appropriate for the businesses that need to be adjacent to a vibrant research and development core: e.g. IP lawyers, accountants etc. This ripple effect is all part of the wider indirect and catalytic economic benefits associated with Oxford Technology Park.



Plan 6

Spatial Concepts

7 The following elements have been identified with regard to the Technology Park concept (see Plan 6).

- **Begbroke park** - existing University Technology Park; meeting the requirements for 'community', 'catalytic comparator' and 'appropriate buildings'. However it has little relationship to Kidlington itself and does not act as a gateway.
- **Airport campus** - this dislocated assembly of buildings is being redeveloped as the airport becomes a regional asset; place-making around the access roundabouts is likely to become more important.
- **Adjacent Employment Sites** - these pre-existing elements, include:

An HQ building has been situated on a prime airport site (i.e. on the airport's arrival axis). However, it does not appear to have been -designed as a gateway building. A drawback of this is that it visually blocks access to the wider airport landholdings and thereby impedes further gateway development on adjoining sites.

The mixed industrial development at Langford Locks has multiple access points and established landscape screening at its perimeter. This makes it unlikely to become integrated with surrounding development.

Two existing business estates have been designed to

simply respect their site and immediate surroundings - they do not contribute to the wider urban setting - as such, they are introverted in nature. Any exemplar gateway development will have to provide a contrast to these estates as it will have to create a strong visual brand to signify the emerging potential of Kidlington.

- **Land with gateway potential** - the area immediately to the west of the airport access roundabout offers the greatest potential for Gateway development; lying to the west of the airport access roundabout. It divides into two parcels:

(A) The land that is immediately adjacent to the airport, which could provide an opportunity to regenerate the airport campus.

(B) The land to the south of Langford Lane; comprising part of the Oxford Technology Park. These landholdings should be developed in a way that signifies a gateway (unlike the existing introverted developments) and fully contributing to the widest possible success of the London-Oxford Kidlington as a high potential regional asset.

Examples

- 8 Figure 1 shows a series of Aspirational Comparators as a means of starting a collaborative discussion on Place-making. These comparators also provide an impression of scale and quality.



Figure 1: Aspirational Comparators

SUMMARY

We believe that the case for Oxford Technology Park is compelling and cannot be over-looked:

- Kidlington fulfils a very important economic role in the Central Oxfordshire Diamond for Growth. Employment space in Kidlington has good take-up credentials and key economic development stakeholders like it as a location.
- Kidlington has close links with Oxford (and of course Oxford University at Begbroke Science Park) and provides a growing, precious cluster that demands recognition and assistance in Cherwell's economic strategies and emerging Core Strategy (and other development plan documents). Unlike 'Science Vale' to the south of Oxford, the northern part of the Central Oxfordshire Diamond has not been promoted with sufficient robustness or co-ordination (see Plan 4)
- The evidence base on the demand and supply dynamics of the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area cannot be ignored. Kidlington has a large shortfall in employment land supply. Bicester has approximately 80 years supply (URS *Employment Land Supply for Cherwell*, 2006).
- The requirement in Policy SP5 of the RSS to satisfy needs to at least 2031 is especially challenging for Oxfordshire and Cherwell given the difficulties facing development in the Strategic Development Area to the south of Oxford, uncertainties over the Northern

Gateway (at Peartree), and the forecasted job numbers for Oxfordshire (18,220) and Cherwell (2,862) for 2006 to 2016. Where, and how, will these jobs be accommodated (including the jobs beyond 2016) unless Cherwell's Core Strategy contemplates the need to release Green Belt land?

- A "pragmatic" approach to vital economic development in the Green Belt is sub-optimum, is not plan-led, and will not meet development needs to the required target date of 2031. Such an approach therefore fails the keys tests of 'legal compliance' and 'soundness' for a Core Strategy: ie justified by a credible evidence base, effective and deliverable, and consistent with national and regional policy.
- As evidenced above, Cherwell's Core Strategy needs to specify that Kidlington comprises one of the "important new employment clusters" based upon university spin-off or other innovative industries (per Policy RE2 and paragraph 22.4 of the RSS). This is entirely consistent with paragraphs 22.5, 22.9 (quoted in full above, page 4) and paragraph 22.10 of the RSS. Taken together, these paragraphs summarise the spatial strategy for Central Oxfordshire: with Oxford "being allowed to grow physically and economically" (albeit pending the Inspector's Report of the Oxford Core Strategy); strong protection in the gap immediately north of Oxford to ensure that Oxford-related expansion does not "adversely affect the future economic buoyancy of Bicester, Kidlington and Witney..."; with

"every opportunity" being taken to promote Bicester as "a new location for higher value and knowledge based business", separately, or in association with the very broad aspirations set out in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc initiative.

- Kidlington should be afforded the same status as Bicester, albeit that the scale of development will be more modest. It should be noted that Kidlington is much better placed to deliver 'smart growth' owing to its locational advantages.
- Kidlington should be pursued by Cherwell alongside Bicester, not as an 'either/or'. This would acknowledge the distinct economic advantages of both locations, it would provide a Plan A and Plan B for the future economic potential of Cherwell, and it would enable both centres to play to their strengths in a co-ordinated and synergistic way. Such synergies may provide the sort of 'step change' transformation Ove Arup considers is required in order to deliver the County's challenging economic strategy for Bicester (paragraph 5.5.2).
- Oxford Technology Park offers a highly sustainable opportunity to deliver valuable, knowledge based 'smart growth'; comprising c1250 direct jobs, with significant indirect and catalytic employment multipliers. The site has good infrastructure capacity and the road system in the locality is relatively unconstrained. There are very few negative impacts, with the balance lying firmly in favour of supporting the proposed development.

- We submit that the case for Oxford Technology Park is compelling. There are few, if any, reasonable alternatives. Even if Bicester is the County and District Councils' preferred location, the scale of proposed development at the Technology Park is so modest that it will not undermine Bicester (unless the economy in Bicester is incredibly fragile - in which case its proffered regional role cannot be supported). Moreover, in these very difficult economic times, it is clearly unsound to restrict successful locations in the hope that growth will transfer (in the short to medium term) to a location, in this case Bicester, that is unproven. Worse still, because of the complex interrelationships set out in the Ove Arup report, restrictions on Kidlington (and its Oxford-related growth) are likely, axiomatically, to undermine Bicester. Bicester is reliant on such Oxford-related growth for its own growth.
- Cherwell's emerging Core Strategy ought to provide for Oxford Technology Park:

(A) Either in the form of a specific designation for B1(b) research & development accommodation;

(B) Or, by ensuring that the Core Strategy is sufficiently specific about: the economic role and potential of Kidlington; and the need to provide an adequate supply of employment land in Kidlington for the plan period; thus, contemplating a specific Green Belt review in this area (or, perhaps if more pragmatism is required, recognizing in policy that the need to accommodate the knowledge economy

is capable of providing the “very special circumstances” necessary to justify granting planning permission for modest knowledge economy development in the Green Belt).

This approach is consistent with Policy SP5 of the RSS, which provides for smaller scale local reviews pursued through the local development framework process, and paragraph 22.18 of the RSS, which sets out the exceptional circumstances that now exist to justify a review taking place. Even if the District Council disagrees that these (regional) exceptional circumstances apply to Kidlington, paragraph 2.7 of PPG2 still affords the opportunity for Cherwell to take a local decision "where other exceptional circumstances exist".

Next Steps

- 1 Over the next few months, our intention is to work closely with Cherwell District Council, and other key stakeholders, to ensure that the evidence base in support of Oxford Technology Park is developed and refined throughout the Core Strategy process.
- 2 We specifically request that a Sustainable Economy Working Group is set up to co-ordinate this evidence base and ensure that our aspirations for Oxford Technology Park, and economic development generally, are addressed in Cherwell's Core Strategy. This Working Group would reflect existing, successful initiatives elsewhere in the County, such as 'Science Vale' and 'Science Oxford', and it would be consistent with the

over-arching role of the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership.

- 3 We would welcome Cherwell appointing a 'Project Champion' for economic development in Kidlington to act as a single point of contact going forward.
- 4 We would encourage Cherwell District Council to revisit the current Employment Land Review (2006): to consolidate and better define the employment needs of the Oxford-Kidlington-Bicester Employment Area; to extend the data beyond 2004; and to broaden the focus from quantitative issues now to include qualitative issues (including gross value add and employment multiplier variables).
- 5 We would welcome Cherwell District Council using this report, or an independently commissioned report based on this report, as part of the evidence base for the emerging Core Strategy.
- 6 **We intend to publish Part II of this report in April 2010.**