

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) accompanies an outline planning application submitted to Cherwell District Council (CDC) by Oxford University Development Ltd. ('OUD') (the 'Applicant') for a proposed mixed-use development known as the 'Begbroke Innovation District'. OUD is a joint venture partnership between Oxford University and Legal & General.
- 1.1.2 This ES reports the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process which has been undertaken and provides the necessary environmental information to inform the decision making process on the planning application. EIA is a systematic assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development. The EIA process is required by UK law for certain types of development projects. The ES describes the proposals and the alternatives that were considered, reports the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed development during its construction and operation, as well as mitigation and monitoring measures.
- 1.1.3 The site of the proposals comprises approximately 170 hectares (ha) of largely agricultural land and Begbroke Science Park to the east of the villages of Yarnton/Begbroke, within the administrative area of CDC in the county of Oxfordshire (the 'Site'). The Site is centred at an OS grid reference of SP 47883 13533. The location of the Site is shown on Figure 1.1. A description of the Site and its surrounds, together with a figure showing the planning application boundary, is provided in Chapter 2: Site and Setting.

Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan



1.2 Planning Context

- 1.2.1 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 ('Local Plan') was formally adopted by CDC on July 2015¹ and provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2031. The Local Plan replaced a number of the 'saved' policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996² though many of its policies are retained and remain part of the Development Plan.
- 1.2.2 A tripartite of landowners of the Site and additional land, comprising Oxford University, Hallam Land and Newcore, made representations to the Local Plan process which included background environmental studies and a concept masterplan. The large area of land (including the Site) was subsequently allocated as a strategic site for development in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review ('LPPR'), which was adopted in September 2020³. This provides for Cherwell's share of Oxford City's unmet housing needs and identifies '*Policy PR8: Land east of A44 at Begbroke/Yarnton*' as one of six strategic 'PR' site allocations to deliver a total of 4,400 new homes. Figure 1.2 shows the location of the six strategic site allocations and Figure 1.3 shows the PR8 policy allocation.
- 1.2.3 The Site comprises the majority of the Policy PR8 area allocated in the LPPR for a new urban neighbourhood, with the remainder associated with the other third parties. The core principles underlying the PR8 site allocation are as follows:
- Delivery of 1,950 residential units, including 50% affordable housing;
 - Provision of non-residential floorspace, including a 14.7ha expansion of the BSP;
 - Provision of a 2 form-entry (FE) and 3FE primary school;
 - Provision of a local centre, including local convenience retail, ancillary business development and / or financial uses, a café / restaurant, community hall, and option for healthcare buildings;
 - Safeguarding of land for provision of 0.5ha of land for a future rail halt;
 - Creation of a LNR of 29.2ha in extent;
 - Creation of a nature conservation area of 12.2ha in extent on land;
 - Creation of a 23.4ha canalside park;
 - The retention of 12ha of agricultural land;
 - New public bridleways suitable for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users; and
 - Safeguarding of land for provision of a new bridge over the Oxford Canal to connect to the nearby allocated PR7b site at Stratfield Farm.
- 1.2.4 Further details of relevant local policy and guidance are provided in the Planning Statement that supports this planning application.

Figure 1.2 Location of Strategic 'PR' Site Allocations

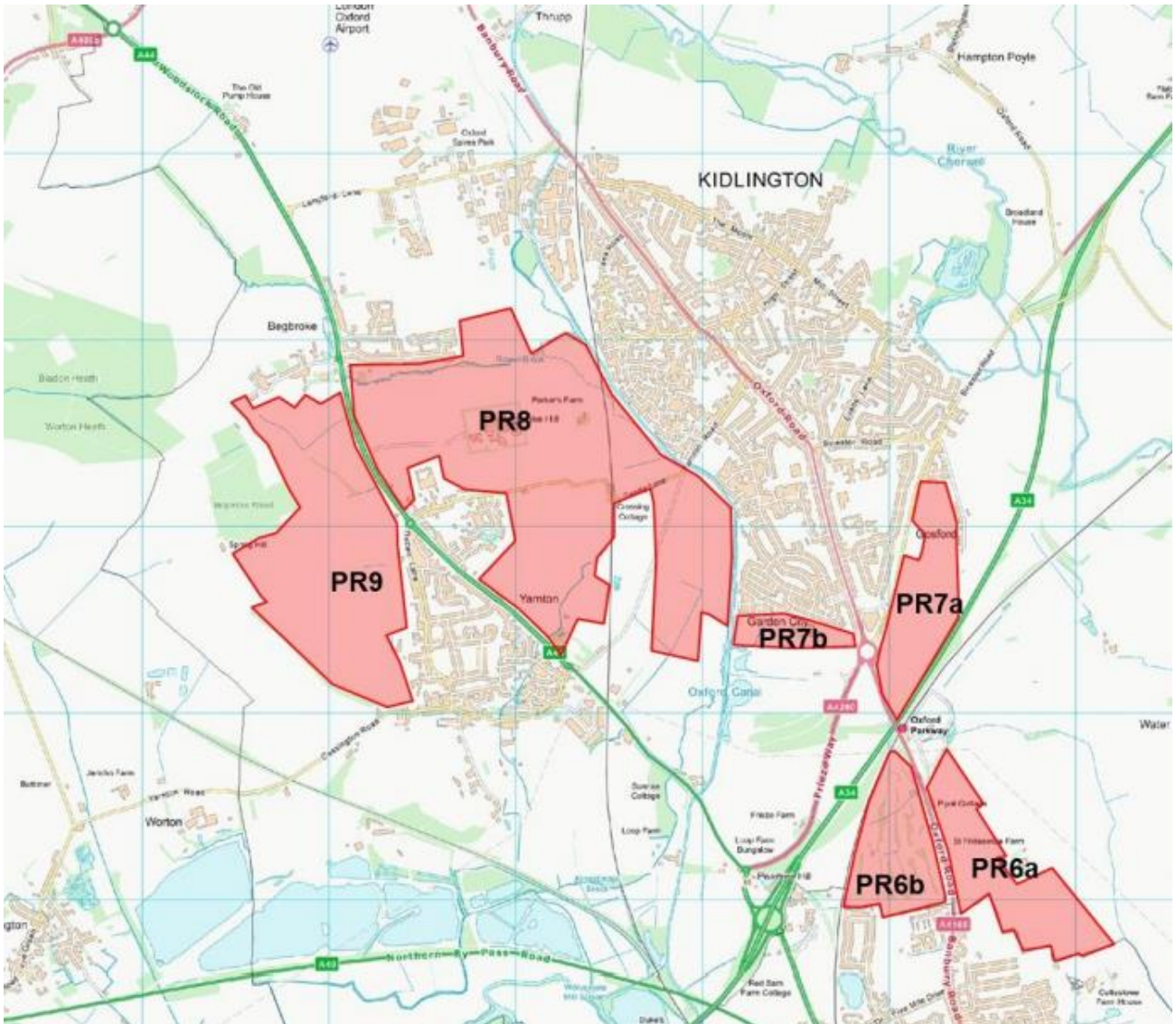
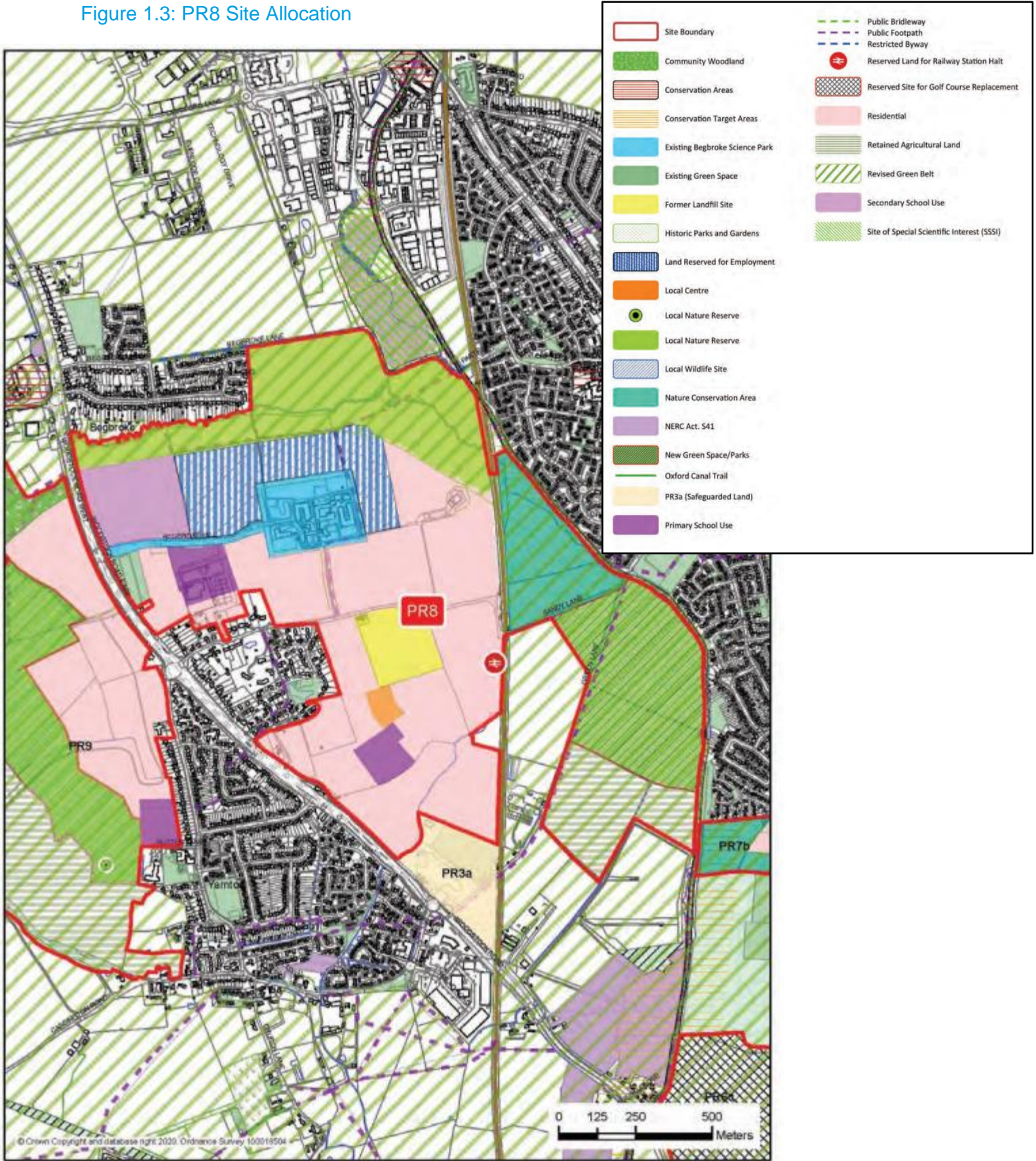


Figure 1.3: PR8 Site Allocation



Overview of the Proposed Development

- 1.2.5 OUD is a joint venture partnership between Oxford University and Legal & General. They aim to deliver a new Innovation District in Oxfordshire that combines world class places of work and learning with an exceptional residential neighbourhood. The proposed development will provide a mix of new homes to ease pressure on Oxford's housing, anchored by new infrastructure, amenity and community uses for the existing and new communities, including high quality open and green space.
- 1.2.6 The planning application will deliver up to 215,000 square metres (sqm) gross external area (GEA) of residential floorspace (including affordable homes) that will deliver circa 1,800 new homes; up to 155,000 sqm of flexible employment and associated uses associated with expansion of Begbroke Science Park; and supporting retail, leisure, education and community/amenity uses (the 'Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development will also provide significant areas of green infrastructure.
- 1.2.7 The description of the Proposed Development in the planning application is as follows:

Outline application, with all matters reserved, for a multi-phased (severable), comprehensive residential-led mixed use development comprising:

- *Up to 215,000 square metres gross external area of residential floorspace (or circa 1,800 homes which, depending on the housing mix, could result in a higher or lower number of housing) within Use Class C3/C4 and large houses of multiple occupation (Sui Generis);*
- *Supporting social infrastructure including secondary school/primary school(s) (Use Class F1); health, indoor sport and recreation, emergency and nursery facilities (Class E(d)-(f));*
- *A hotel (use class C1);*
- *Supporting retail, leisure and community uses, including retail (Class E(a)), cafes and restaurants (Class E(b)), commercial and professional services (Class E(c)), local community uses (Class F2), and other local centre uses within a Sui Generis use including public houses, bars and drinking establishments (including with expanded food provision), hot food takeaways, venues for live music performance, theatre, and cinema.*
- *Up to 155,000 square metres gross external area of flexible employment uses including research and development, office and workspace and associated uses (Use E(g)), industrial (Use Class B2) and storage (Use Class B8) in connection with the expansion of Begbroke Science Park;*
- *Highway works, including new vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian roads and paths, improvements to the existing Sandy Lane and Begbroke Hill road, a bridge over the Oxford Canal, safeguarded land for a rail halt, and car and cycle parking with associated electric vehicle charging infrastructure;*

- *Landscape and public realm, including areas for sustainable urban drainage systems, allotments, biodiversity areas, outdoor play and sports facilities (Use Class F2(c));*
- *Utility, energy, water, and waste water facilities and infrastructure;*
- *Together with enabling and associated works, including temporary meanwhile uses.*

Development affects the setting of a listed building and includes potential alterations to public rights of way.

1.3 Structure of Planning Application

1.3.1 The planning application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved (Tier 1). Following the grant of outline planning consent, Development Area Briefs will then be developed in accordance with the consented parameters of the outline planning permission that will provide greater detail on the Proposed Development for the Development Zones within the Site (Tier 2). These will form the controls for delivery of Reserved Matters Applications (Tier 3).

1.4 Environmental Impact Assessment Process

1.4.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017⁴ (as amended⁵) ('EIA Regulations'), require that any proposed development falling within the description of a 'Schedule 2 development' (as defined within the EIA Regulations) will be subject to an EIA when such development exceeds thresholds and is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of such factors as its nature, size or location (Regulation 2 (1)). The Proposed Development falls within a description of development listed within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations: 10b Urban Development Projectsⁱ. Given the scale and extent of the Proposed Development, the EIA process was undertaken voluntarily and was managed by Quod.

1.4.2 The ES was prepared by Quod and a team of competent experts as set out in Table 1.1. The ES has been prepared in line with the EIA Regulations.

1.4.3 A scoping study was undertaken as the first stage of the EIA process to determine the scope of the ES. The Applicant requested a 'Scoping Opinion' from CDC which was adopted on 27th January 2023 and set out their opinion on the scope of the ES. Assessments for environmental topics scoped into the EIA were then undertaken and the ES prepared based on the Scoping Opinion. Further information on the scope of the ES and the general approach to the EIA is provided in Chapter 3: EIA Methodology.

1.4.4 The ES contains the information referred to in regulation 18(3)-(5) and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations as is 'reasonably required' to assess the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. Chapter 3: EIA Methodology explains how the ES is

ⁱ a) the development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development; or b) the development includes more than 150 dwellings; or c) the overall area of the development exceeds 5 ha.

compliant with the EIA Regulations and sets out where the information specified in the EIA Regulations can be found.

1.5 ES Structure and EIA Project Team

1.5.1 The ES comprises the following volumes:

- Volume I: Main Text
- Volume II: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Volume III: Appendices
- Non-Technical Summary

1.5.2 Table 1.1 sets out the EIA project team and the authors of the ES chapters.

Table 1.1: EIA Project Team

Consultant Role / Input	Organisation
Developer/Applicant	Oxford University Development Ltd.
Project Manager	Turner and Townsend
Planning Consultants EIA Co-ordinator	Quod
Architect	Hawkins Brown
Landscape Architects	Okra
ES Volume I (ES Chapters)	
Chapters 1 – 6: Introduction; Site and Setting; EIA Methodology; Alternatives; The Proposed Development; Demolition and Construction	Quod
Chapter 7: Socio-Economics	Quod
Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage	Oxford Archaeology
Chapter 9: Transport and Access	KMC Transport Planning
Chapter 10: Noise and Vibration	Buro Happold
Chapter 11: Air Quality	Buro Happold
Chapter 12: Climate Change	Buro Happold
Chapter 13: Ecology	BSG Ecology
Chapter 14: Agricultural Land and Soil Resources	Askew Land and Soil
Chapter 15: Ground Conditions and Contamination	Hydrock
Chapter 16: Water Resources and Flood Risk	Buro Happold

Consultant Role / Input	Organisation
Chapter 17: Effect Interactions	Quod
Chapter 18: Summary of Mitigation, Monitoring and Residual Effects	Various
ES Volume II – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	LDA Design
ES Volume III – Appendices	Various
ES Non-Technical Summary	Various

1.5.3 Regulation 18(5)(a) of the EIA Regulations requires that the ES must be prepared by 'competent experts'.

1.5.4 Quod is the lead editor of this ES and author of certain chapters as identified in Table 1.1. Quod is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Quality Mark Scheme, an accreditation scheme which sets high standards for EIA practice and demonstrates a commitment to excellence in EIA activities.

1.5.5 Each member of the project team is a suitably qualified professional and details of the professional competency of the technical author is provided in each technical chapter (Chapter 7-16 and Volume II). The Applicant has provided a statement below confirming that it considers the experts to be competent experts, as required by the EIA Regulations.

“In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), Oxford University Developments Ltd (the Applicant) can hereby confirm that the technical consultants appointed to contribute and author this Environmental Statement are competent experts and have demonstrated evidence of sufficient expertise to carry out robust assessment and reporting. This is evidenced in the technical chapters of the Environmental Statement.”

1.6 Terms and Definitions

1.6.1 For ease of reference, definitions of the terms used commonly throughout the ES are provided at Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Key Terms and Definitions

Key Term	Definition
Applicant	OUD
Proposed Development	See Paragraph 1.2.7 of this ES Chapter and Chapter 5: Description of the Proposed Development (and associated appendices) for a full description.
The Site	The extent of the Proposed Development site which is subject to the outline planning application. The indicative Site boundary is shown on Figure 1.1, Figure 2.1 of Chapter 2: Site and Setting, and planning drawing <i>BEG-HBA-SW-00-SK-A-SK80_Parameter Plan - Site Location Plan</i> in Appendix 5.4.
Site Address	Begbroke Science Park

	Begbroke Hill Begbroke Kidlington OX5 1PF
CDC	Cherwell District Council
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council

1.7 Environmental Statement Availability

- 1.7.1 The ES and all application documents are available online. A copy of the ES will available within Begbroke Science Park. Additional hardcopies of the ES can be provided on request (at a reasonable fee). Alternatively, a memory stick of the ES is available for a fee of £15 from Quod. The Non-Technical Summary can be obtained free of charge upon request in hard copy or electronic copy. All ES documents are available by calling Quod on 020 3597 1000 quoting Reference No. Q210810 or emailing reception@quod.com.
- 1.7.2 Comments on the planning application can be made online during the consultation period via <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/>. Alternatively, comments can be addressed in writing to:

Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxon, OX15 4AA

References

- ¹ Cherwell District Council, 2015. Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 – July 2015.
- ² Cherwell District Council, 1996. Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996. November 1996.
- ³ Cherwell District Council, 2020. Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Part 1) Partial Review. September 2020.
- ⁴ HMSO, (2017). The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The Stationary Office. April 2017.
- ⁵ HMSO, (2018). The Town and Country Planning and Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2018. The Stationary Office. October 2018.