

To: City Executive Board
Date: 11 May 2017
Report of: Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services
Title of Report: South Oxford Science Village Planning Application

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Request approval to join Magdalen College and Thames Water in the submission of a planning application for the proposed South Oxford Science Village at Grenoble Road, to fund the determination of the application including pursuing any appeal processes that may ultimately be necessary
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Bob Price, Board member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development
Corporate Priority:	Vibrant, Sustainable Economy
Policy Framework:	Oxford Economic Growth Strategy
Recommendations: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1	Delegate authority to the Executive Director, Sustainable City, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to join Magdalen College and Thames Water in the submission of a planning application for the South Oxford Science Village and, if necessary, to pursue the application at appeal.
2	Approve pursuing the South Oxford Science Village site through the South Oxfordshire Local Plan process, including examination; and if necessary, through a planning appeal or call-in inquiry.
3	Give project approval for the sum of up to £220,000 representing the Council's share of the costs in accordance with paragraph 4.5 of the Council's constitution to cover additional technical studies and a planning application, and a potential call-in inquiry or appeal. This is in addition to the approved current budget provision of £560,000, which covers promoting the scheme through the Local Plan, and provides the basis for a potential planning application.

Appendices
Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Introduction and background

1. The City Executive Board in July 2014 considered a report on the land south of Grenoble Road site and the potential partnership with adjoining landowners to pursue the development of the City Council's landholding. CEB approved the principle of pursuing discussions with adjoining landowners for a partnership to deliver development south of Grenoble Road. As part of the budget setting process that year money was made available to fund a third of the initial costs for drawing up the planning application.
2. South Oxford Science Village (the name of the proposed development on land south of Grenoble Road) would provide new homes, including affordable homes, to meet Oxford's housing need, together with an extension to the Magdalen Science Park, new schools and community facilities, local retailing and a new park and ride facility. The scheme will be well served by existing and new sustainable transport links and infrastructure and located close to major employment areas, as well as supporting the regeneration of the wider Leys area.
3. The City Council has been working with Magdalen College and Thames Water, the other partners with a land interest, to prepare a masterplan and development proposals to be promoted through the planning process. The proposals are now being finalised, although there will need to be continuing adjustments in response to the dialogue with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) as the Local Planning Authority, and other statutory consultees and stakeholders.
4. SODC is preparing a revised Local Plan and has just released its Second Preferred Options version of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. It is understood that under the current timetable, the Local Plan examination will be in Spring 2018. At the present time we understand that SODC's draft Local Plan provides for only 3,750 homes towards Oxford's unmet housing need, whilst it was agreed by all authorities through a process overseen by the Oxfordshire Growth Board that this figure should be 4,950 homes. SODC has not included the land south of Grenoble Road as a preferred location for housing development in its draft Plan, but has allocated other green belt sites in Berinsfield and Culham. The City Council and its partners are clear that there is a strategic case and exceptional grounds arising from the need to continue to support the economic success of Oxford for a sustainable urban extension at Grenoble Road.
5. The City Council, as Local Planning Authority, will be making further representations on the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033 Second Preferred Options document. The City Council raised serious concerns at earlier stages about the failings under the Duty to Cooperate and not making suitable provisions to meet their share of Oxford's unmet housing need both in terms of a sustainable location and the quantity of homes. Based upon the content of their Second Preferred Options document it is likely the City Council will be making similar objections, and would wish to pursue them at their Local Plan examination.

Planning Application and Local Plan

6. The preference of the South Oxford Science Village partners would be to promote the site through the Local Plan process and the Local Plan examination, in accordance with the established principles of a 'plan-led' approach. In this way there would be a full consideration of all the strategic choices and options for major housing allocations. However, we understand that promoters of other major sites within the South Oxfordshire District will be make planning applications ahead of the Local Plan examination in order to seek an advantage in the process. This includes the Homes and Communities Agency's recent proposals for the development of Chalgrove Airfield.
7. In these circumstances, our QC's advice is that we should in parallel have the option to make a planning application, and pursue this to appeal, if required. It may be that the Secretary of State will call in all of the strategic sites being promoted via a planning application. The final decision to submit a planning application and the timing, and a subsequent appeal or call in inquiry would be taken in the light of the circumstances and advice at that time, but events may progress quickly, hence the need to seek authority at this time.

Financial implications

8. Together with the other site promoters, the City Council would be responsible for a third of the costs of submitting the planning application, the determination of the application and any subsequent appeal. The City Council in 2015/16 made budget provision for £560,000 to meet its share of the costs in promoting the scheme through the Local Plan route, and this work is approaching completion. This work also provides the basis for a planning application, but an application would require additional work and incur pre-application and application fees, as well as the prospect of a call-in inquiry or appeal, with the Council's share estimated at £180,000. There have also been some additional technical studies and work required, principally further archaeology and public consultation, where the Council's share is £40,000, making a total budget provision of £220,000. Council approved this additional budget provision at its meeting of 20 February 2017 funded from underspends in the current year and or reserves.

Legal issues

9. The three landowners concerned have sought to set out the principles by which they would jointly pursue this proposal in a Heads of Terms document. These principles would form the basis of a full development agreement between them, as the project progresses. Appropriate contracts with professional advisors would also be required.

Level of risk

10. The Risk Register is attached at Appendix 1

Equalities impact

11. There are no Equalities Impact Assessment implications, beyond the general principle that the proposed development will deliver new and affordable homes to meet Oxford's unmet housing need, and provide a range of employment opportunities to sustain the City's economic growth.

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Background Papers: None