

Council Report



Agenda item no. 10

Report of strategic director (Anna Robinson)

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Science Vale UK – Enterprise Zone fast track planning application protocol

Recommendation

the delegation to the Head of Planning is amended so that the officer can grant or refuse planning applications for the erection of buildings (excluding dwellings) extensions and plant up to 10,000 square metres gross floor space or 15 metres in height within the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone.

Purpose of report

1. To encourage new business development and rapid growth in business rates in the Enterprise Zone the council is introducing a fast track planning application protocol. An amendment of the delegation to the Head of Planning will support the fast track protocol.

Strategic Objectives

2. The Enterprise Zone contributes to the Vale of White Horse District Council's strategic objective of supporting a vibrant local economy and the objective to promote Science Vale UK as a world leading area for science and technology.

Background

3. The Enterprise Zone will benefit the Vale by creating new jobs and generating business rates growth that will be retained by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and reinvested to improve local infrastructure. To encourage new business development and rapid growth in business rates the council is introducing a fast track planning application protocol. The protocol will also involve Oxfordshire County Council. The application protocol will result in all Enterprise Zone applications being determined within six weeks.
4. It is likely that many of the new businesses wanting to locate in the Enterprise Zone will be creating a large number of new jobs and will have a requirement for large premises.
5. The existing Constitution requires that the planning committee grants or refuses applications for the erection of buildings (excluding dwellings) extensions and plant over 1,000 square metres gross floor space or 15 metres in height. Therefore in order to maintain the fast track protocol it is likely that additional meetings of the planning committee will have to be convened to determine Enterprise Zone applications.
6. To avoid the cost of convening additional meetings it is proposed that the delegation to the Head of Planning to grant or refuse planning applications for the erection of buildings (excluding dwellings) extensions and plant is amended from up to 1,000 square metres to up to 10,000 square metres gross floor space or 15 metres in height. This amendment would only apply to applications for planning permission within the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone.

Options

7. The council could maintain existing planning application processes, and not introduce a fast track planning application protocol. However there is a risk that development and the creation of new jobs may be delayed or even lost to another area.
8. The Chairman of the Planning Committee could be requested to convene an additional meeting if this is required in order to determine an Enterprise Zone application within six weeks. This would result in extra costs for the council and could be an inconvenience for committee members.

Financial Implications

9. The amendment of the Head of Planning's delegation will not result in any additional financial commitments.

Legal Implications

10. The existing delegation to the Head of Planning is set out in Part 9 of the constitution. An amendment to the delegation will require a resolution in favour by the full council.

Conclusion

11. The fast track planning application protocol satisfies the Government's requirement that an Enterprise Zone offers a simplified approach to planning. The protocol will ensure that the Government formally confirms that specified sites at Harwell Oxford

and Milton Park have Enterprise Zone status and business rates growth can be retained.

12. The protocol is an interim measure pending the preparation and adoption of Local Development Orders (LDOs). LDOs allow local planning authorities to extend permitted development rights for certain types of development. This means that during the period of an LDO certain types of development can proceed without the need for the submission or determination of a planning application.
13. Amending the delegation to the Head of Planning not only avoids the cost of convening additional planning committee meetings but also demonstrates the Vale's commitment to providing simplified planning within the Enterprise Zone.

Background papers

- Enterprise Zone Fast Track Planning Application Protocol
- Constitution (reference Part 9, page 351)
- Certified maps showing the boundaries of the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone