Description of development: A flood alleviation scheme to reduce flood risk in Oxford, comprising:
Construction of a new two stage channel from the confluence of the Botley and Seacourt Streams, extending south easterly to north Kennington;
Floodwalls to the north of Botley Road, at Seacourt Park and Ride and adjacent to Bullstake Close allotments;
Floodgates at Helen Road, Henry Road and Seacourt Park and Ride;
Flood defences at New Hinksey between Abingdon Road in the west and the River Thames in the East, Ferry Hinksey Road and north of South Hinksey;
Control Structures at Bulstake Stream, Eastwyke Ditch, Hinksey Pond, Redbridge Stream and Cold Harbour;
Bridges and culverts to cross highways and footpaths maintaining access routes;
Spillways, embankments, low flow control structure, modifications to Seacourt Stream, ford crossings, channel clearance, ditch widening and deepening, removal of weir and installation of telemetry cabinets;
Repairs to existing walls along Osney Stream and in Hinksey Park.
The creation of new and improved habitat for flora, fauna and fisheries, and change of use of land to provide exchange for existing open space.
Works will include extraction of some sand and gravel for reuse on the site and exportation from the site.

Name of site: The Scheme area extends from north of the A420 Botley Road to south of the A423 ring road, running predominantly between the A34 to the west and the Oxford to London railway line to the east. It also includes land between the A4144 Abingdon Road to the west and the River Thames to the east from just to the north of the access track adjacent to Oxford Spires Hotel to Donnington Bridge.

Is the proposal a departure from the development plan?
An application is a departure application if it is for development which does not accord with one or more provisions of the development plan.

Preliminary assessment of the application suggests that it is a departure application.

State the reasons why it is not a departure from the Development Plan:
The application proposes a flood alleviation scheme to reduce flood risk in Oxford, including the construction of a new channel and other associated infrastructure.

The development includes the change of use of land from its current uses to use for flood alleviation purposes and would also involve a substantial amount of operational development. The majority of the proposed development site lies within the Oxford Green Belt.

OMWCS policy C12 states that proposals that constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, will not be permitted except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt
by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The NPPF sets out what comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It states that mineral extraction and engineering operations are not inappropriate in the Green Belt as long as they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. It is not considered that the proposed use of land for a flood alleviation scheme is contrary to the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in the NPPF. However, the built development required for the scheme would include infrastructure such as bridges, embankments and flood gates which would be above ground and would have some impact on the openness of the Oxford Green Belt in this location. Therefore, overall the proposals are considered to comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As a result, OMWCS policy C12 requires assessment of the extent to which very special circumstances apply.

As the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it should be considered to be a departure from the development plan.

The application site covers mineral bearing land and therefore the construction of the proposed channel beneath ground level would involve the extraction of sharp sand and gravel. OMWCS policy M5 states that prior to the adoption of OMWCS Part 2 - Site Allocations Document permission will be granted for the working of aggregate minerals where this would contribute towards meeting the requirement for provision and where it is in accordance with other policies. It states that permission will exceptionally be granted for the working of aggregate minerals outside the sites allocated where extraction of the mineral is required prior to a planned development in order to prevent the mineral resource being sterilised. The Part 2 Site Allocations document has not yet been adopted and therefore the proposals are not considered to be a departure from OMWCS policy M5, subject to compliance with other policies. Sand and gravel removal would be incidental to the main purpose of the proposals and would prevent the sterilisation of this resource.

The proposals would affect a large area and have a number of potential impacts, including on ecology, amenity, archaeology, highways, the water environment, agricultural land, landscape and rights of way. There are policies related to each of these potential impacts and the details of the proposal will be assessed against the relevant policies in the course of determining the application. At this point it is not possible to conclude whether the detailed proposals accord with these policies, but there does not appear to be a conflict in principle and therefore compliance will be assessed through the determination of the application.

**Conclusion**

The application may or may not satisfy the policies of the development plan and it will be for the Planning Authority to decide when processing the application whether the application complies with these policies. However, preliminary assessment of the proposal has identified that the proposal is likely to be a departure from Green Belt policy.
Signed ………M Thompson…………….. (Case Officer)

Date …13th April 2018………………………………

Report approved by ………David Periam……………………
(Development Management Team Leader)

On behalf of the Director for Planning & Place

Date …13th April 2018…………………………..