

Environmental Health	No objection subject to a condition to explore for contamination.
OCC (Highways)	No objection. Comments and suggested conditions.
Neighbour Objectors (4)	There is too much traffic clogging up this area already. Parking in connection with the school causes particular problems at certain points in the day. The existing boundary fence to the allotments is not secure. Question the need for more housing in Didcot, a scheme for bungalows would be better, are the houses for sale or rent? Involves the loss of a pub and local facility.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 P64/R2873 – new public house – Approve
Planning permissions granted in 1970's for extensions to the public house.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 Adopted SOLP Policies

G2 – Protection of District's resources, G3, proximity of new development to existing services and links to public transport, G6 – Quality of design and local distinctiveness, EP1 – adverse affects of development, EP3 – proposals for external lighting, EP4 – Protection of water resources, EP6 - Surface water drainage requirements, EP7 – Ground water resources, EP8 – Contaminated land, D1 – Principles of good design, D2 – Parking for vehicles and cycles, D3 – Provision of private amenity areas, D6 – design against crime, D8 – Conservation and efficient design, D9 – Renewable energy, D10 – Management of waste, H4 – New housing within the towns, H7 – Mix of units, H8 - density, H9 – affordable housing, T1 transport, CF1 – Loss of community Facilities.
South Oxfordshire Design Guide

PPS1 – Delivering sustainable development
PPS3 - Housing
PPG13 – Transport
PPS22 – Renewable Energy

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The main issues in this case are;

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable
- H4 Criteria
- Provision of gardens
- Affordable housing
- Mix of units
- Sustainable design issues

6.2 **Principle.** There are two issues of principle in this case; the loss of the community facility, and whether a residential use of the site is appropriate.

1. **Loss of community facilities.** Policy CF1 of SOLP aims to protect essential community facilities unless a suitable alternative provision is made for the facility on a site elsewhere in the locality (criteria i). In this case the facility is a pub and both The Crown on Queensway and The Acorn on Park Road are within walking distance, as are other public houses in the town centre. Because there are several other similar facilities within the immediate locality there would be no

objection to the loss of the existing pub. As the existing facility is not therefore “essential” there is no need to show that the existing public house is not viable and has been marketed.

2. **Residential use.** The site lies within the centre of Didcot and the principle of residential redevelopment is acceptable subject to the criteria of Policy H4 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (see below).

6.3 **H4 criteria issues.**

- i. That an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost;

The site is visible but its use as a car park and a large 20th century pub means it is not particularly open. The site is not an important open space in my view and would have little ecological value.

- ii. Design, height and bulk in keeping with the surroundings;

The character of the area is varied with three, two and single storey buildings in terraces and semi-detached form. The scale, form and design detailing shown on the application drawings are in keeping with the general character of the area and are in accordance with the principles set out in the Design Guide.

- iii. That the character of the area is not adversely affected;

The site is not a sensitive location and given the comments in ii) above the character of the area would not be adversely affected;

- iv. Amenity, environmental or highway objections; and

Highway issues. There is no objection in terms of traffic generation or highway safety associated with the residential use of the site. One of the main concerns of local residents is the loss of the parking associated with the public house. The car park of the public house is used to provide informal overflow parking for the school on the opposite side of the road. Casual parking in the car park and on the road at school drop off and pick up times causes congestion and high levels of traffic movements. Members of the allotment gardens have also raised concerns in relation to the loss of parking on the site and the potential for the access to the allotment gardens to be blocked by the displaced parking from the school and construction traffic. However, the school traffic has no rights to use the private parking facilities of the public house and blocking an access on the public highway is an offence, it is therefore my view that planning permission can not be refused for these reasons.

Parking provision. Each property would benefit from a car port, cycle and bin storage to the rear of each dwelling and spaces for four visitor parking spaces would also be provided. Whilst this is an under provision from the two spaces per dwelling in the Council’s standards the site is in a highly sustainable location and a refusal on lack of parking could not be justified.

Neighbour impact.

Given the relationship with surrounding buildings the scheme would have a very limited impact on neighbours in my view.

- v. Backland development issues

Not applicable.

- 6.4 **Provision of garden areas.** Minimum standards for new residential development are recommended in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and in policy D3 of the Local Plan. The Council’s standards require 50 square metres of private amenity area for 2

bed houses and 100 square metres for 3 bed units. In the case of this scheme, the gardens for the two bedroom units would comply with this standard (all just over 60 square metres in size) with the three bed units being below the standard (plots 1 and 8 are just over 90 square metres in size and 2 and 7 are just over 70 square metres in size). An under provision of garden area can be an indicator that a scheme is an overdevelopment of a site and the Town Council have raised this concern. However, in this case the density is approx 43 dwellings per hectare (dph), which is not excessive for a site location within a town. In addition, the two bed units are all over 10 square metres above the minimum standard; technically the gardens could be shown to meet the standard but this would result in awkwardly aligned boundaries which would not provide a high quality layout. Given what I consider to be an acceptable scheme in other respects, the need to use land efficiently and the proximity of the site to other town centre facilities I consider that this under provision is not sufficient reason to refuse planning permission in this case.

- 6.5 **Provision for affordable housing.** Policies H9 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to achieve a provision of affordable housing on sites of 0.5 hectares in size or which are capable of accommodating more than 15 dwellings in settlements where the population is more than 3000. In this case, the number of units and the size of the site are below the threshold and there is no requirement to provide affordable housing.
- 6.6 **Mix of units.** Policy H7 of the adopted Local Plan 2011 requires an acceptable housing mix to ensure a steady provision of small two bedroom properties. The most recent housing needs assessment has suggested that up to 60% of new units should be 1 or two bed dwellings. In this case, the proposal provides for 4 no two bed dwellings (50% of the units). This slight under provision on the mix (60% = 4.8 units) would not be sufficient grounds to refuse planning permission.
- 6.7 **Sustainable design issues.** Policy D8 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that all new development demonstrates high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and materials. The Sustainability Statement indicates that a Code 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes can be achieved.
- 7.0 **CONCLUSION**
- 7.1 Your officers recommend that Planning permission is granted because there are other public houses in the immediate vicinity that can provide an alternative facility and the current use is not essential. Didcot is a sustainable location for new houses and the proposed terrace of 8 houses represents an efficient use of land and provides development in keeping with the varied character of the area. Whilst concerns in relation to the displaced parking for the school are acknowledged, this is an informal arrangement that should not be seen to fetter the redevelopment of the site. As such the proposal accords with the Development Plan Policies.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement 3 years**
- 2. Compliance with approved drawings**
- 3. Sample materials**
- 4. Close existing access**
- 5. Contamination**
- 6. Provide parking prior to occupation**
- 7. Landscaping**
- 8. Turning area**
- 9. Details of surface water drainage**
- 10. Scheme for bollards to prevent parking on highway verges**

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