

APPLICATION NO.	P17/S1965/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	7.6.2017
PARISH	EAST HAGBOURNE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Jane Murphy Pat Dawe
APPLICANT	Catesby Estates Ltd
SITE	Land east of Park Road Didcot, OX11 8JT
PROPOSAL	Outline Planning Application (with all matters reserved except for means of access from Park Road) for up to 135 residential dwellings including open space, sustainable urban drainage systems and associated landscaping on land east of Park Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire.
OFFICER	Lloyd Jones

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is being reported to Planning Committee because the officer's recommendation conflicts with the view of the Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the site location plan **attached** as Appendix A) comprises 7 hectares of agricultural land to the south west of Didcot. The site falls within the parish of East Hagbourne, but on the boundary with Didcot. Coscote is sited 350 metres to the south, while the village of East Hagbourne lies 700 metres to the east.
- 1.3 The site is bounded by a Public Right of Way 189/17 to the north, and beyond this are single-storey dwellings that are served off Loyd Road. An existing band of trees and hedgerow form the northern boundary of the site. To the west is Park Road, which connects Coscote to Didcot. Agricultural land falls to the south and east of the site. The site is not located within any area of special landscape designation.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This application seeks outline planning permission for up to 135 dwellings including 40% affordable dwellings. The application seeks approval of a new access via a priority junction off Park Road towards the north west of the site, but reserves detailed matters relating to the scale, layout, and appearance and landscaping of the development for future consideration.
- 2.2 An illustrative masterplan (**attached** as Appendix B) has been submitted with the application to demonstrate how the site could accommodate up to 135 dwellings, drainage basin and green infrastructure. The application is accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including a Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement. These documents are available to view on the Council's website at www.southoxon.gov.uk

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **East Hagbourne Parish Council** – Object for the following reasons:

1. The whole of the site is located in the Parish of East Hagbourne;
2. Similarities with proposed development off New Road, East Hagbourne (P15/S3228/O) that was refused by Planning Committee and dismissed at appeal.
3. The main similarity is the site is in East Hagbourne bordering Didcot. Similarly contrary to every local plan and would have an adverse effect on people in Southern Didcot.
4. Defined as green space in Didcot Garden Town Plan and is identified as VF14 in the East Hagbourne Village Character Assessment and Landscape Study that will inform the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan.
5. The Character Assessment identifies that the area is highly sensitive as it is visible from all directions. Public footpaths run along the northern and western boundaries affording views to North Wessex Downs AONB.
6. Outside built environment of Southern Didcot. Clear intrusion into farmland and the rural and green environment.
7. The site has not been allocated for housing in current or emerging Local Plan. East Hagbourne is classed as a small village.
8. The site is a valued landscape. Would have a detrimental effect on the ancient medieval settlement of Coscote. The land itself is good farmland (mostly grade 2/3a) and there is significant evidence of ancient "ridge and furrow" cultivation.
9. Park Road is a minor urban road and is unable to handle the extra traffic that would be generated by this development.
10. Local residents report significant flooding in the area in heavy rains and a housing development of this size will only exacerbate this problem.

Didcot Town Council – Object on the following grounds:

1. Inappropriate for the area.
2. Coalescence of neighbouring villages – Coscote and the Hagbournes
3. Insufficient economic, social or environmental benefits.
4. Impact on the landscape.
5. Traffic and road safety.
6. Increase flood risk.
7. Previous similar applications, such as the refusal by the Secretary of State on appeal of P15/S3228/O – Land to the East of New Road
8. Increased pressure on schools and services. This is exacerbated by the decision to bring forward Phase 10 of the Great Western Park development, with the attendant increase in pressure on Didcot's amenities and services.

Didcot Garden Town Team – The proposed site occupies an area of land that the Garden Town Delivery Plan identified as a proposed green buffer area between Didcot and the settlements of West Hagbourne and East Hagbourne.

We believe it is important to protect surrounding villages from encroachment as Didcot Garden Town expands.

The Didcot Garden Town Team will support East and West Hagbourne Parish Councils in their efforts to designate this area as a "green buffer area" within their emerging neighbourhood plans.

Oxfordshire County Council Highways - No objection subject to conditions and completion of a legal agreement to secure improved public transport and travel plan

monitoring fees.

Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology – No objection subject to a condition requiring an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

Oxfordshire County Council Education – No objection subject to Community Infrastructure Levy funding to mitigate early education and childcare settings, primary, secondary and special schools in the area at this time to meet the demands arising from the development.

Oxfordshire County Council Countryside Access - We would like a contribution to enable us to surface the adjacent public footpath running between Lake Road and Park Road. Ideally we'd like to create a route which is suitable for year round pedestrian (and possibly cycle) use.

CPRE - Objects to the application on the following grounds:

1. The site has not been allocated for housing in the current local plan, emerging local plan nor neighbourhood plan.
2. East Hagbourne is classed as a small village.
3. Contrary to Garden Town Plan which identifies site as a green buffer.
4. Site is on the edge of the Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and would clearly impact on views.
5. On productive and ancient farmland and would damage historic village of East Hagbourne.

CPRE (Rights of Way) – Objects to the application on the following grounds:

As the proposed development, which breaches the current southern boundary of the built-up area of Didcot, which Didcot FP17 and its claimed extension follow, and would thereby obliterate the wide open views towards the Downs currently available from these footpaths which follow this boundary, we wish to strongly object to this proposed development on public rights of way grounds.

Drainage Engineer (MONSON) - No objection subject to conditions.

Thames Water - No objection in respect of sewerage infrastructure. With regard to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of the developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, watercourses or a suitable sewer. It is recommended that the applicant should ensure that storm flows are attenuated or regulated into the receiving public network through on or off site storage.

Forestry Officer (South Oxfordshire District Council) - No objection, but one of the keys to achieving a successful development will be a well designed landscaping scheme reflecting the sites opportunities and constraints.

Countryside Officer (South Oxfordshire District Council) - If planning permission is granted a contribution of £2,777 is required to provide mitigation measures to protect Mowbray Fields LNR. In addition, if planning permission is to be granted, then the conditions should be imposed to ensure the ecological baseline is kept up to date and the detailed scheme design continues to deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

Urban Design Officer – We were consulted on the pre-application in May 2017 and a detailed response was provided. Most of my previous comments still stand. I do not have much more to add at this stage (being an outline with all matters reserved except

for access). I would recommend that the design team review my previous comments so that these can be addressed in the future.

Landscape Consultant –

1. The proposed site is located on the southern edge of Didcot adjacent to a public right of way which runs east from Park Road to Mowbray Fields Local Nature Reserve. The proposed development is on a green field site which is part of an important area of open land which forms the gap between Didcot and Coscote and West Hagbourne to the south.
2. The site does not lie within or contain any landscape designations but the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies less than 2km to the south, the site is within the setting of the AONB. From the site there are open views across the landscape to the AONB.
3. The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVIA), EDP3664_03b, describes the proposed development and the impact it will have on the local and distant landscape. The development would result in changes to the landscape. Mitigation measures are discussed and assessed against the impacts. This is a comprehensive review of the landscape issues.
4. The Illustrative Masterplan, drawing no CSA/3255/106 Rev C, and Plan EDP L6: Illustrative Landscape Strategy, drawing no EDP3664/14a, show the proposed housing within a landscaped setting which could in time reduce the impact of this development within the landscape. The proposed landscape scheme is an important part of this application, including the trees on the periphery of the scheme and within the housing layout. Often trees are illustrated on layouts but not implemented in the final scheme as services, both above and below ground, are not included in the initial layouts. Services need to be considered and submitted at the same time as the landscape scheme to ensure trees are not compromised by the lack of root space or the close proximity of underground services or lighting columns.
5. The public right of way is an important feature along the northern boundary of the site. It is good to see the housing development pulled back from this boundary and the proposed houses facing the public right of way, rather than backing onto it. The location of the LEAP and SUDS drainage basin along the northern boundary help create opportunities to soften the impact of the development along this section of the public right of way.
6. Throughout the development it is good to see that houses are shown fronting onto the various public open spaces, including the LEAP. This helps provide informal surveillance and an open aspect for residents and the public using the open areas.
7. In the Design and Access Statement (DAS) the plan on page 18, "Figure 3.8: Services and facilities plan" should be amended as the Railway Station and Railway lines to Swindon. *This has subsequently been revised.*
8. The submitted Tree Survey covers the area around and adjacent to the proposed housing site. However included within the application is a proposed footpath/cycle route south which would connect Didcot to Coscote along the eastern side of Park Road. In the submitted Transport Assessment, Appendix F - Pedestrian/Cycle Path Plan, "Proposed Indicative Footway/Cycleway Provision", drawing no J32-2763-PS-004, it proposes the new route would curve around a large tree near Coscote. The condition of this important tree should be assessed and consideration taken to the design of any paths or services in its vicinity. *This has been addressed accordingly.*

Conservation Officer – I am satisfied that the heritage statement serves as a visual record of this non-designated heritage asset. I understand that further archaeological

investigation of the site is to be done and the results of this should inform a decision on the proposed development of this site and be subject to the advice of the county archaeologist.

Historic England (South East) – No comments to make.

Environmental Health – Air Quality – No objection, subject to condition regarding mitigation.

Environmental Health & Housing - Contaminated Land – No objection, subject to conditions.

Waste Management Officer (District Council) – Provided guidance on the waste management service.

Housing Development – Affordable housing should reflect the significant demand for two bedroom units for both rented and shared ownership tenures with a reduction in one bedroom accommodation and an adjustment to the number of larger homes.

Neighbour Representations

319 responses objecting to the planning application. The issues are summarised below:

- Contrary to the Garden Town Delivery Plan.
- Site falls outside development boundaries.
- Site not allocated for housing.
- Emerging Local Plan proposes 5%-10% growth over a 15 year plan period delivered by way of infill development or small developments of up to 10 units. Policy mirrored in emerging neighbourhood plan.
- Site not allocated in emerging local plan.
- Adverse development as it harms countryside and settlement hierarchy.
- Green space in Didcot Garden Town plan.
- Land required to prevent to adjoining villages and hamlets.
- Case for housing not been demonstrated.
- Area should be preserved with no further expansion.
- Swallowing up of East Hagbourne and West Hagbourne.
- Didcot supposed to be a Green Town.
- Impact on broader plans for Garden Town Plan.
- Broadly similar to refused planning application P15/S3228/O.
- Proposal similar in scale and nature to appeal dismissed for development of Land East of New Road, East Hagbourne APP/Q3115/W/16/3153639.
- Set a precedent for remaining green space.
- Site is not a brownfield site.
- Development of site is not sustainable.
- No benefits to development.
- Contradiction with Town Plan.
- Plenty of scope for development in north and west Didcot.
- Land allocated as green belt.
- Development could jeopardise funding for Garden Town from the Government.
- Promised land would not be built on.
- Scheme may bring the 'benefit' of new housing. However the harms it causes significantly outweigh this benefit and therefore it is not sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms

- Errors in supporting evidence.
- Do not believe houses will be affordable.
- Speculative application similar to ‘green gap’ application off New Road.
- Too much new housing in Didcot.

Site specific

- Coalescence of Didcot with East and West Hagbourne and the Hamlet of Coscote.
- Site provides an important gap.
- Keeping of green necklace is important.
- Site forms part of a valued landscape.
- Site is green lungs for Didcot.
- Restrict access to open space.
- Fields an important and valued feature of the local landscape
- Proposal will urbanise site.
- Fields provide separation between neighbouring villages
- Loss of agricultural land.
- Site shows ridge and furrow of ancient farmland.
- Significant impact on landscape.
- Blight the countryside.
- Public right of way is in constant use.
- Impact on setting of AONB.
- Spoil views of AONB.
- Loss of attractive views of AONB.
- Damage attractive landscape setting.
- Urbanising views.
- Loss of green gap.
- Loss of views from public footpath.
- Loss of peace and tranquility.
- Loss of buffer and encroachment into open countryside.
- Increase in noise and disturbance.
- Development will not be sympathetic.
- Development will be an eye sore.
- Would reduce level of space between villages.
- Obliteration of unique character of area.
- Will become an area of bricked houses with no gardens.
- Development of site will lead to anti-social behaviour.
- Destroy rural amenity.
- Destroys a long standing building line.
- Increase in noise and air pollution.
- Development will result in a loss of wellbeing.
- Increase in pollution.
- Increase in light pollution.
- Lack of consultation from developer.
- Area provides much needed escape to countryside.
- Not a high quality scheme.
- Urban heat island effect from built up development.

Highways

- Traffic through West Hagbourne is at dangerous levels where the road is narrow

in place.

- Road system not designed to cope with increased traffic.
- Surrounding highway network is saturated.
- Park Road development opposite has resulted in noticeable increase in traffic.
- Effect of traffic through West Hagbourne.
- Making walking and cycling dangerous.
- Road through West Hagbourne unsuitable for large volumes of traffic.
- Route through West Hagbourne to A34 is most convenient route.
- Emergency vehicles use route to A34 and any increase in traffic will impede progress.
- Increased frequency of accidents.
- Park Road full of pot holes.
- Road unsuitable for HGVs
- Access into site unsuitable.
- Poor access to public transport.
- No access to cycleway north or south.
- Proposed cycle route only serves a small section.
- Roads to the south not built to cope with the increased volume of traffic.
- Didcot already congested.
- Traffic increased since development of Great Western Park.
- High speeds along road.

Flooding/Drainage

- Fragile drainage system at back of Loyd Road.
- Several houses have flooded at Loyd Road in the past.
- Not uncommon for fields to be flooded.
- Loyd Road sewers prone to flood.
- Further housing will add to drainage pressures.
- No natural drainage in the area.
- Inadequate provision for surface water run off.
- Attenuation pond will become a breeding ground for mosquitos and other insects.
- Sewerage a significant problem with frequent attendance from Thames Water.

Local Infrastructure

- Impact on local services such as schools, medical practices and dentists.
- Increase pressure at local hospital.
- Local schools already over subscribed.
- Increase in demand for school places.
- Waste collection already stretched. Proposal will compound this.
- No local shops within half a mile.
- Even local vets are under pressure.
- Increase in pressure on refuse collections, highway maintenance, fire services and police force.
- Impact on leisure facilities.

Ecology

- Detrimental to local environment.
- Concerns for local wildlife.
- Affect the delicate natural flora and fauna of the adjacent Mowbray Fields and fill

- ponds, currently managed by The Earth Trust.
- Destroy natural habitat.
- Site supports a variety of wildlife including hares, kestrels, red kites, barn owls and buzzards.
- Great crested newt population in area.

Other non planning issues

- Loss of views from adjacent properties.
- Impact on property prices.
- Noise and dust from construction works.
- Site is incorrectly identified.
- Will result in an increase in crime.

2 responses supporting the proposal have been received. They are summarised below:

- Would love to purchase one of these houses.
- Support the new homes.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [WE10/017](#) - (27/04/2010)

Formation of a new access on a classified road.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

5.2 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) Policies

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy
CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
CSR1 - Housing in villages
CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
CSC1 - Delivery and contingency
CSDID4 - Other proposals for Didcot
CSEN1 - Landscape protection
CSEN3 - Historic environment
CSG1 - Green infrastructure
CSH1 - Amount and distribution of housing
CSH2 - Housing density
CSH3 - Affordable housing
CSH4 - Meeting housing needs
CSI1 - Infrastructure provision
CSM1 - Transport
CSM2 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
CSQ3 - Design

5.3 **South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) policies;**

- D1 - Principles of good design
- D10 - Waste Management
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D3 - Outdoor amenity area
- D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
- D7 - Access for all
- EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment
- EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration
- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP6 - Sustainable drainage
- EP8 - Contaminated land
- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- G4 - Protection of Countryside
- R1 - Outdoor sport or play areas
- R2 - Provision of play areas on new housing development
- R3 - Indoor sport facilities in built up areas
- R6 - Public open space in new residential development
- R8 - Protection of existing public right of way
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.4 **Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033** - The council has recently completed the Publication version of the Local Plan. The objective of the Local Plan is to support the settlement hierarchy, the growth and development of Didcot Garden Town, the delivery of new development in the heart of the district, the growth of market towns and the vitality of villages. This version of the plan is due to be consulted on in October 2017. At this time limited weight can be applied to this plan.

5.5 **Emerging East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan** – The Parish Council is working on the draft version of its Neighbourhood Plan. The draft version has to undergo consultation prior to submission to the District Council. At this time limited weight can be attributed to this plan.

5.6 **Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan** – A consultation on the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan was undertaken from 19 June to 31 July 2017. The Garden Town Team is currently assessing the feedback received. At this time limited weight can be given to this plan.

5.7 **Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents**

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The relevant planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

- The principle of the development, including:
 - how the development of the site fits with the council’s spatial strategy,
 - the council’s housing land supply position,
 - the level of compliance with the emerging Local Plan,
 - the level of compliance with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, and
 - the level of compliance with the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan

- Matters of detail / technical issues, including:
 - affordable housing and housing mix,
 - highway safety, traffic impact and parking
 - landscape impact,
 - trees and ecology,
 - design and layout,
 - neighbour amenity and amenity of future residents,
 - agricultural land,
 - flood risk and surface / foul drainage,
 - environmental matters (air quality and contamination), and
 - heritage impact

- Infrastructure requirements, including:
 - on-site infrastructure to be secured under a legal agreement,
 - contributions pooled under the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The principle of the development

How the development of the site fits with the Council's spatial strategy

6.2 Policy CSS1 of the SOCS sets out the overall distribution strategy for the district and identifies that proposals for development in South Oxfordshire should be consistent with the overall strategy of:

(i) focusing major new development at the growth point of Didcot so the town can play an enhanced role in providing homes, jobs and services with improved transport connectivity;

(ii) supporting the roles of Henley, Thame and Wallingford by regenerating their town centres through measures that include environmental improvements and mixed-use developments and by providing new houses, employment, services and infrastructure;

(iii) supporting and enhancing the larger villages of Berinsfield, Benson, Chalgrove, Chinnor, Cholsey, Crowmarsh Gifford, Goring, Nettlebed, Sonning Common, Watlington, Wheatley and Woodcote as local service centres;

(iv) supporting other villages in the rest of the district by allowing for limited amounts of housing and employment and by the provision and retention of services; and

(v) outside the towns and villages, and other major developed sites, any change will need to relate to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment.

This distribution strategy is followed through in Policy CSR1 which addresses housing in the villages and indicates that sites will be allocated for housing in the larger villages and that there would be no limit on infill development in these settlements.

6.3 The application site falls beyond the built up limits of East Hagbourne which is identified as a larger village within the SOCS. It is not closely surrounded by buildings or a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. It does not represent an infill development. It is also not a site allocated for housing. The development therefore conflicts with the development plan, insofar as it does not meet with the policy CSR1 criteria against which proposals for development beyond the built-up limits of larger villages are assessed.

6.4 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. One such material consideration, of notable importance, is the NPPF.

The Council's housing land supply position

- 6.5 To significantly boost the supply of housing, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements. This supply should include an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Alternatively, where there has been persistent under delivery of housing, the buffer should increase to 20% to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply.
- 6.6 The most recent evidence base that informs the council's housing requirements is the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). To meet the identified housing need for the district, the SHMA mid-point is 755 homes per annum. This is a sizable uplift from the requirement for 547 homes per annum set out in the SOCS.
- 6.7 Based on the evidence in the SHMA and past delivery, the Council has a housing land supply in the region of 4.1 years (including the 20% buffer for under delivery). The Council cannot therefore currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 6.8 Paragraph 49 of the NPPF specifies that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Paragraph 14 adds that where relevant policies are out of date, *planning permission should be granted unless*
- *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.*
- 6.9 This means that the policies for the supply of housing in the SOCS are given significantly less weight. Applications for housing should now be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and should be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing.

The level of compliance with the emerging Local Plan (2033)

- 6.10 The emerging local plan identifies that new housing development will be permitted at Strategic Allocations, smaller sites allocated or carried forward in this plan and on sites that are allocated by Neighbourhood Development Plans. The application site does not form part of a strategic allocation or a site carried forward. Within the Publication version of the Local Plan a small portion of the south western corner of the application site is identified as forming part of safeguarded land for the Harwell Strategic Link Road and Southern Didcot Spine Road. I am of the opinion that the proposal would not prejudice the future delivery of the Harwell Strategic Link Road and Southern Didcot Spine Road. However, as it stands, I consider that limited weight can be given to the conflict with the emerging Local Plan.

The level of compliance with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.11 East Hagbourne Parish Council are progressing with a draft version of their Neighbourhood Plan. The draft Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to an independent examination, and possible modification, before progressing through to a referendum. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a strategy and land-use planning framework to guide development within East Hagbourne and does not allocate the site for development.

The PPG identifies that the emerging neighbourhood plan may be a material consideration and that paragraph 216 of the NPPF also applies to the weight to relevant policies in emerging plans. However, only limited weight can be attributed to the draft Plan at the current time, as it is not yet at an advanced stage.

The level of compliance with the Didcot Garden Town Proposed Delivery Plan

- 6.12 Didcot was awarded Garden Town status by the Government in 2015. The Didcot Garden Town Proposed Delivery Plan was consulted on between 19 June 2017 and 31 July 2017 and the Garden Town team will analyse the feedback from that consultation before finalising the plan. Within the delivery plan the application site is illustrated as being located within a green buffer, which is an issue raised in a significant number of representations. I am of the view that only limited weight can be given to this issue at this time.
- 6.13 Overall, the main issue to be taken into account in the determination of this application is whether any harm that would arise from the development would be so significant and demonstrable that it would outweigh the benefits of the increase in housing. The impacts of the development and their relative significance are discussed below and the planning balance is weighed up in section 7.0 of this report.

Matters of detail / technical issues

Affordable housing and housing mix

- 6.14 The application documents state that 40 percent of the homes would be affordable and this complies with policy CSH3 of the SOCS. The Council’s Housing Development Team have confirmed that it would be preferable for the majority if not all of the 2 bedroom properties to be delivered as houses rather than flats. The provisions of the legal agreement would secure a tenure mix of 25 percent shared ownership and 75 percent affordable rent.
- 6.15 The affordable units would be distributed throughout the development and a Section 106 legal agreement would require the units to be built “tenure blind” in respect of external design and features so they are materially indistinguishable from the general market housing. Subject to the completion of a S106 to secure the affordable housing provision, I consider that the scheme is acceptable in this respect and complies with the relevant policies.
- 6.16 In terms of the market mix, the market housing mix from the SHMA is summarised in the table below.

Market homes	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
SHMA	6%	27%	43%	24%

The NPPF seeks to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes to address the need to plan for a mix of housing based on current and future needs. A range of house types are proposed and the mix would need to reflect that identified above. This could be conditioned accordingly.

- 6.17 Overall, the mix of homes would deliver a wide choice, in accordance with SOCS policy CSH4.

Highway safety, traffic impact and parking

- 6.18 With respect to highway safety matters, the advice set out in the NPPF is that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe. Policies D1, D2, T1 and T2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) also require an appropriate parking layout and that there would be no adverse impact on highway safety.
- 6.19 This application is seeking approval of the access arrangements. The site would be accessed via a new priority junction towards the north western corner of the site off Park Road, which also includes the provision of a new footway connecting to the existing footway along Park Road to the north. To the south, a 2.5m wide pedestrian and cycle way along the edge of Park Road is proposed. It is also intended to provide a new gateway feature into Didcot that would align with the change to the 30 mph speed limit. In addition, it is proposed to narrow Park Road with a build-out give way traffic calming feature.
- 6.20 A Transport Assessment (TA) has been submitted with the application and has been reviewed by the County Council Highways Officer. The TA finds that the proposal would generate 68 and 88 two-way vehicular trips in the AM and PM respectively. A capacity assessment has been undertaken of the Park Road and Foxhill roundabouts. They identify that the impact of the development during the majority of scenarios is not considered to be material and significant. The largest impact occurs during the PM peak hour at the Park Road roundabout, where the model results identify that the queues on Broadway and Foxhill Road increase by 7 and 13 vehicles respectively. A Travel Plan has been provided that details the sustainable travel measures that would be undertaken to reduce single occupancy car trips.
- 6.21 The County Council Highway Officer has reviewed the TA and concludes that the findings are reasonable. They have requested a contribution towards public transport to support the bus service and also a contribution towards bus stop infrastructure improvements. A contribution is also required towards monitoring a travel plan. These can be secured through the provisions of a legal agreement and are outlined in the relevant part of the report below.
- 6.22 Overall, the NPPF identifies that development should only be refused on highway grounds where the residual cumulative impacts are severe. As set out above the County Council Highway Officer has no objection to the proposal. Subject to the completion of a legal agreement and imposition of conditions, I consider that the proposal is acceptable in terms of highway matters.

Landscape impact

- 6.23 The text accompanying policy CSEN1 of the SOCS explains that there will be some further development on the edge of our settlements and that we will take account of and seek to reduce the impact of development on the environment. Policy C4 of the SOLP advises that development that would damage the attractive landscape setting of settlements will not be permitted.
- 6.24 The site is not covered by any landscape designations, however the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies 2km to the south of the site. Views are afforded from the site of the AONB.
- 6.25 A significant number of representations, including those from East Hagbourne Parish Council, raise a number of landscape concerns including the closure of the gap

between the Didcot and East Hagbourne, the impact on the AONB and the impact on the adjacent public right of way. Additionally, significant concern has been raised regarding the site forming part of a green buffer set out in the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan.

- 6.26 The greenfield site is positioned to the south of the built up area of Didcot. A public right of way forms the northern boundary of the site that connects Park Road to the west to Mowbray Fields Local Nature Reserve to the east. The proposed development would extend the settlement edge of Didcot further to the south, thus reducing the separation between Coscote and West Hagbourne to the south.
- 6.27 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted in support of the application. The LVIA recognises that the site is located within the Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes Landscape Character Area (LCA) and the Open Rolling Downs Landscape Type (LT). The LVIA finds that the landscape character of the site is of medium sensitivity. In respect of the effects on visual amenity the LVIA finds that the proposed development would have limited material effects upon visual amenity from the surrounding countryside. However, significant effects would arise for those directly overlook the site and from the users of the adjacent public right of way. With regards the AONB, the LVIA concludes that there are no anticipated adverse effects upon the AONB designated landscape or its setting. The proposed mitigation includes the introduction of trees and hedgerow features that would soften the edge of the settlement. Overall, the LVIA finds that that the proposal is in keeping with the settlement edge landscape character and would not result in any material landscape or visual effects.
- 6.28 The Council's Landscape Consultant considers that the LVIA comprehensively describes the impact the development would have on the local and distant landscape, and that the development would result in changes to local landscape. It is recognised that the landscape scheme would be an important element and the provision of trees along the periphery of the site would help reduce the impact of the development over time. It is noted that the public right of way is an important feature, but the Council's Landscape Consultant supports the principle of the housing being pulled back from the boundary, as well as the position of the SUDS drainage basin and LEAP that would soften the overall impact.
- 6.29 In their response the Didcot Garden Town Team identify that they will support East and West Hagbourne Parish Councils in their efforts to designate this area as a "green buffer area" within their emerging neighbourhood plans. It is acknowledged that this space comprises a green buffer within the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan document identifies that broadbrush principles were used to sketch the green buffers. The document goes on to highlight that once mapped and evaluated the extent and component of the green buffer should be included in the Local Neighbourhood Plan of each village to ensure that this asset can be captured. The national importance of creating a Garden Town is acknowledged, but at this time I am of the view that limited weight can be given to the proposed green buffer, which would require further work to be undertaken through the neighbourhood plan process.
- 6.30 A number of the representations have touched upon the similarities with the appeal decision (appeal reference: APP/Q3115/W/16/3153639) for the residential development of Land East off New Road, East Hagbourne. I am of the opinion that there are material differences between this appeal decision and this planning application. The Inspector at paragraph 27 of her decision stated:

"As outlined above, the appeal site provides an important buffer between Didcot and

East Hagbourne. In this context I consider the site has considerable perceptual value, which is augmented by its visibility. The site also has notable scenic value by virtue of the attractive views and visual links to the open countryside it provides. As the last remaining stretch of open countryside alongside New Road it is locally distinctive and has particularly significant value.”

I consider that the site at Park Road affords open and attractive views to the wider countryside and this is similar to the scheme at New Road. Nevertheless, the application site is not the last the remaining stretch of open countryside and this, in my opinion, clearly differentiates the two schemes.

- 6.31 Overall, the development of this open agricultural field for residential development would have a significant urbanising effect and would result in the erosion of the rural landscape, as well as the closure of the gap with Coscote and West Hagbourne. Notwithstanding this I am of the view that the effects would be localised in nature and in time would be mitigated by a comprehensive landscaping scheme. Furthermore, the proposal would not harm the setting of the AONB. However, the proposed residential development of this greenfield site together with the associated infrastructure would inevitably have an adverse effect on the rural quality of this landscape. Accordingly, the proposal would result in landscape harm. I am of the opinion that this is a matter that must be put into the planning balance to weigh against the proposal. Further commentary is provided on this at Section 7.0 of this report.

Trees and ecology

- 6.32 Policy C9 of the SOLP seeks to retain landscape features that make an important contribution to local area. The Council’s Forestry Officer notes that there are very few trees growing on and adjacent to this site, and none of them are protected by a tree preservation order or a conservation area. The Forestry Officer is of the view that the small number of trees that are present are of limited arboricultural quality, and has no objection to the proposal from arboricultural perspective.
- 6.33 The illustrative masterplan shows a comprehensive scheme of tree planting along the southern fringe of the site that would soften the overall impact of the development and allow the transition to the open countryside. I therefore consider that the proposal would not have any impact on trees.
- 6.34 With regards to ecology, policy C6 of the SOLP and policy CSB1 of the Core Strategy seek to avoid a net loss of biodiversity will be avoided and opportunities to achieve a net gain across the district will be actively sought. Policy C8 of the SOLP expects that development should not have an adverse effect on protected species, while policy C9 seeks to prevent the loss of important wildlife habitat features. This is echoed in paragraph 109 of the NPPF.
- 6.35 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Phase 2 Surveys relating to roosting bats and badgers has been submitted in support of the application. The main habitat on the site is improved grassland which has a low ecological value. No evidence indicating the presence of protected species has been found during the surveys. The applicant has provided details of a biodiversity accounting exercise which demonstrates that overall the illustrative scheme has the potential to deliver a small net gain for biodiversity and would be in accordance with Policy CSB1 of the Core Strategy.
- 6.36 Mowbray Fields Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is sited 400m to the east of the site. The Council’s Countryside Officer sought the views of the Earth Trust who manage the site to consider the implications of this proposal and a neighbouring proposal and whether

the increase in the local population is likely to cause negative impacts on the LNR. The main impact from this development is likely to be an increase in recreational pressures on the LNR and a proportionate financial contribution is therefore sought to mitigate the impact on the LNR.

- 6.37 The Council's Countryside Officer has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions and a financial contribution. I therefore consider that the proposal would not have any significant effect on protected species or important habitats and it would deliver a net gain for biodiversity.

Design and Layout

- 6.38 The NPPF confirms the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF also provides that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.
- 6.39 The NPPF goes on to advise that although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment (paragraph 61).
- 6.40 The design policies of the SOCS (particularly CSQ3) and SOLP policies (particularly D1-D4) echo these requirements.
- 6.41 The layout of the proposed development is to be the subject of a reserved matters application. However, an illustrative site layout has been provided and this sets out the key design principles that a subsequent reserved matters application should reflect. This is supported by a detailed design and access statement which explains the design concepts behind the illustrative layout and how this relates to the surrounding area.
- 6.42 The indicative plans show that sufficient public open space (POS) could be provided to meet policy R6 of the SOLP, which requires 10% of the gross site area to be provided as informal open space. The scheme would deliver 40 percent public open space (2.84 ha). The illustrative layout indicates green buffer spaces to the southern and western periphery of the site. A local equipped area of play would be provided that would comply with policy R2 of the SOLP.
- 6.43 The Council's Urban Design Officer raised concerns relating to the illustrative layout and its failure to demonstrate that it would comply with the principles of the design guide. In response to these concerns the agent has identified that the submitted Development Framework Plan and Illustrative Masterplan responds to the comments raised by:
- Identifying a new location for the LEAP to ensure it is better integrated to the development;
 - Bringing the building line forward at the north of the site to be more in line with the strong building line on Park Road;
 - Providing a greater southern-eastern landscape buffer, and subsequent reduction in dwelling numbers, to enhance the connection to the wider countryside.

- Lowered the density and extended the landscape buffer thereby lowering the overall numbers from 150 to 135 dwellings

6.44 I consider that the scheme represents an appropriate response to the constraints and opportunities of the site and its surroundings. I am satisfied that the scale of the development would be appropriate to the context of the site and that the development would generally meet the design objectives of the NPPF and the development plan policies that seek to secure high quality developments.

Agricultural land

6.45 Paragraph 112 of NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile land (BMV). Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use poorer quality land in Grades 3b, 4 and 5 in preference to higher quality land. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF puts the protection and enhancement of soils as a priority in the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. The proposal would result in the loss of Grade 2 and Grade 3a Agricultural land, and this weighs against the proposal.

Neighbour amenity and amenity of future residents

6.46 Policy D4 of the SOLP requires new development to secure an appropriate level of privacy for existing residents. The layout may change at reserved matters stage and the impact on neighbouring properties will be carefully assessed under a future application. Based on the indicative layout, proposed strategic landscaping and the separation that can be achieved between the proposed dwellings and neighbouring properties, I am of the opinion that the development could be achieved without any adverse impacts on neighbours in terms of light, outlook and privacy.

6.47 The development would create more traffic movements and this would inevitably have some impact on existing residents in terms of noise and disturbance. I do not consider that this would be unacceptable given that the proposal would involve a residential scheme alongside an existing residential development. I have recommended a condition to restrict construction hours to ensure that the disturbance to neighbours during construction work is limited.

6.48 In terms of the amenity of future occupiers of the site, the residents would have the benefit of private or shared amenity space. The public open space would be accessible to all residents and occupiers of surrounding properties and would create an appropriate living environment for future residents.

Flood risk and surface / foul drainage

6.49 The application site is within Flood Zone 1 (least probability of flooding) and as such, there are no objections to the development in relation to flood risk.

6.50 Notwithstanding the above a number of concerns have been raised regarding localised flooding. The proposal incorporates a drainage basin towards the north eastern corner of the site. The Council's Drainage Consultant sought further clarification from the application regarding surface water drainage, as there was some ambiguity in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). This related to the fact that given the topography of the site and the unknown outfall level on the north side of the site that there may be a requirement to raise. In the absence of a watercourse in the immediate

vicinity, surface water will be discharged at an attenuated to the sewer to the north of the site, which would then discharge to the watercourse 400 metres to the east. If problems were to arise from this approach an alternative of draining to the watercourse east of the site is suggested, which would require work on third party land.

- 6.51 The applicant has confirmed that whichever outfall solution is selected at the detailed design stage the surface water will end up in the watercourse, either directly or through a short section of adopted sewer. It is also intended for the surface water drainage outfall to be adoptable and the applicant is in liaison with Thames Water in respect of this. The Council's Drainage Consultant is satisfied with this and has no objection, subject to conditions.
- 6.52 With regards to foul drainage and water supply, Thames Water advise that there is sufficient sewerage and water supply infrastructure capacity and have no objection.

Environmental matters (air quality, noise and contamination)

- 6.53 Policy EP1 of the SOLP seeks to secure mitigation measures to ensure that developments do not have an adverse effect on the health and amenity of future occupiers.
- 6.54 An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted in support of the planning application. The Council's Environmental Health Officer identifies that based on the size and location of the proposed development, in order to protect public health from the cumulative impact of small developments, mitigation is required. Mitigation measures can include measures such as electric vehicle charging points, and I have recommended an appropriately worded condition.
- 6.55 In respect of noise, in order to ensure that construction work is carried out within appropriate times, I have recommended a condition relating to hours of construction and that they are undertaken at reasonable times.
- 6.56 With regards to contamination, the Council's Contaminated Land Officer has considered the details that were submitted with the application and has no objection to the development subject to contaminated land conditions. These require a phased risk assessment to include an investigation and any necessary remediation of the land.

Heritage impact

- 6.57 Paragraph 129 of the NPPF requires that local planning authorities identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal. Policy CON13 of the SOLP requires appropriate archaeological investigation for developments that affect sites of archaeological importance.
- 6.58 An Archaeological and Heritage Assessment has been submitted and identifies a surviving ridge and furrow within the site. The overall of this feature is considered to be low as it is already truncated and fragmented. The Council's Conservation Officer is satisfied that the heritage statement serves as a visual record of this non-designated heritage asset.
- 6.59 With regards to archaeology, the site is located in an area of archaeological interest. The County Archaeologist has recommended that a staged programme of archaeological investigation will need to be undertaken. I recommend that this is conditioned accordingly.

Infrastructure requirements

On-site infrastructure to be secured under a legal agreement

- 6.60 On-site infrastructure can be secured through a legal agreement under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 6.61 In accordance with the council's S106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, the following additional financial contributions would be required towards on-site infrastructure:
- Provision of recycle bins - £170 per property
 - Street naming and numbering - £107.80 per 10 dwellings
 - Delivery of on site open space and LEAP
 - Improvement to bus service - £107,325
 - Bus stop infrastructure - £19,140
 - Travel Plan Monitoring fee - £1,244.40
 - Works to Public Right of Way - £20,000
 - Mowbray Fields Local Nature Reserve - £2,777
 - Council's S106 monitoring fee.
- 6.62 I consider that these contributions / obligations accord with policy CS11 of the SOCS, which requires new development to be supported by appropriate on and off-site infrastructure and services. They accord with the relevant tests in the NPPF as they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, are directly related to the development and are fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Off-site contributions pooled under the Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.63 The proposed development would be CIL liable at a charge of £150 per square metre. This would exclude the floor space of the affordable homes as relief from the charge can be claimed against these dwellings. The money collected from the development can be pooled with contributions from other development sites to fund a wide range of infrastructure to support growth, including schools, transport, community, leisure and health facilities.

7.0 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1 In this case there are material considerations that indicate that the application should be decided other than in accordance with the development plan. The Council cannot demonstrate evidence of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites the relevant development plan policies for the supply of housing are out of dates. As a result this is a material consideration that can justify a departure from the development plan and the grant of planning permission.
- 7.2 Where policies for the supply of housing are out of date, paragraph 14 of the NPPF requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that planning permission be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. In order to assess whether a proposal constitutes sustainable development it must satisfy the three dimensions, which include the economic, social and environmental planning roles.

- 7.3 In respect of the economic dimension, the Government has made clear its views that house building plays an important role in promoting economic growth. In economic terms, the proposal would provide construction jobs and local investment during construction, as well as longer term expenditure in the local economy. I am therefore of the view that moderate weight should be afforded to these benefits.
- 7.4 With regards the social dimension, the proposal would support the delivery of housing, including the provision of 40 percent affordable housing. Within the District there is a significant need for new homes and the proposal would help meet this need. I therefore give substantial weight to this social benefit.
- 7.5 In relation to the environmental dimension, the proposal would result in landscape harm, however, this can be mitigated through landscaping. Further to this, it is recognised that the site falls within a green buffer as set out in the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan, although in my opinion limited weight can be applied to this. However, I am of the view that the proposal would result in landscape harm, which does weigh against it. The proposal would result in the loss of Grade 2 and 3a (BMV) land that again weighs against it.
- 7.6 The proposed development would not be at risk from flooding. The proposed impact on designated heritage assets would be negligible and such impacts can be mitigated. With regards to biodiversity, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on any ecological interests at the site or wider area, and there would be an overall biodiversity net gain.
- 7.7 In respect of accessibility, the site although situated in the parish of East Hagbourne is positioned to the south of the built up edge of Didcot. Didcot has a wide range of services, amenities and employment opportunities, including access to public transport. As part of the proposal improvements are proposed to public transport infrastructure. Safe and suitable access can be provided to the site.
- 7.8 Overall, I am satisfied that there are no adverse impacts, which, either individually or together are of a sufficient weight to indicate that the proposal should be refused. Placing all of the relevant material considerations in the balance, I am of the view that on balance the adverse landscape impact would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits that include the provision of much needed housing to significantly boost the supply as stipulated in the NPPF. I therefore consider that the proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To delegate authority to grant planning permission to the Head of Planning subject to:**

i) the prior completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the affordable housing, financial contributions and other obligations stated above; and

ii) the following conditions:

- 1. Approved plans.**
- 2. Commencement - outline with reserved matters.**
- 3. Maximum number of dwellings.**
- 4. Market housing mix (outline).**
- 5. Levels (details required).**
- 6. Sample materials required (all).**
- 7. Hours of operation - construction/demolition sites.**

8. Landscaping (including hardsurfacing and boundary treatment).
9. Landscape management plan.
10. Tree protection (general).
11. Sustainable drainage works (details required).
12. Foul drainage works (details required).
13. Biodiversity mitigation and enhancement strategy.
14. Air quality mitigation.
15. Refuse and recycling storage (details required).
16. New vehicular access.
17. Details of vehicular accessed, driveways and turning areas.
18. Access and vision splays.
19. Cycle parking facilities.
20. No surface water on highway.
21. Construction traffic management.
22. Travel information pack.
23. External lighting.
24. Archaeology (submission and implementation of a written scheme of investigation).
25. External lighting – general.
26. Contaminated land – phased risk assessment.
27. Contaminated land – remediation and validation.

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