
APPLICATION NO.	P19/S0257/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	14.2.2019
PARISH	DIDCOT
WARD MEMBER(S)	Victoria Haval Andrea Warren David Rouane
APPLICANT	Didcot Town Football Club
SITE	Land at Didcot Town Football Club, Bowmont Water Didcot
PROPOSAL	Development of 25 apartments, replacement car parking spaces, and new sports pitches.(as amended by drawings received 19 February 2020, site plan received 10 June 2020, drawings received 10 October 2020 and drawings and energy statement received 22nd January 2021), site plan received March 2021.
OFFICER	Phil Moule

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application was on the agenda for the Planning Committee on 20 July 2021. It was resolved to defer the item to enable the committee members to benefit from a site visit before considering the proposal. A site visit has been arranged for 9 August 2021.
- 1.2 The application relates to the Didcot Town Football Club site situated within the Ladygrove Development in Didcot. The site is accessed via Bowmont Water. The application site (shown on the OS extract attached as Appendix A) encompasses part of the land forming the football club and is comprised of a car parking area and a rectangular area of open grassed space. The car park and area of open grassed space are set between the Oak Tree Health Centre to the north and the Willowbrook Leisure Centre to the south. To the west of the application site is the football stadium. To the east of the site is residential development forming part of the Ladygrove estate. The application boundary also includes the car parking area associated with the football club, the Willowbrook Leisure Centre and the Oak Tree health Centre.
- 1.3 The proposal (as amended) is for the construction of a block of 25 apartments consisting of 7x1 bed units and 18x2 bed units. Ten of the apartments (40%) would be affordable in the form of shared ownership units. The building would be part three storey and part four storey. An area of amenity space would serve the flats as would a secure area of car parking. Dedicated visitor car parking would be provided within the car parking area serving the football club. In addition to the apartment building, the application includes improvements to the grass football pitch (outside the stadium) which include the drainage of the pitch, upgraded floodlights and dugouts and perimeter fencing.
- 1.4 As originally submitted the application was for two residential blocks, with Block 1 containing 23 apartments and Block 2 containing two apartments. The proposals also included the provision a full-size artificial grass pitch (AGP), to replace the grass pitch currently on the site outside of the stadium, a half size AGP and two Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's). The 25 apartments proposed were intended to fund the delivery of

the full-size AGP. Revenue generated from the use of the full-size AGP was then intended to fund the delivery of the two MUGA's and the half-size AGP. Ultimately, the revenue generated from the use of both AGP's and the MUGA's was intended to provide funding to secure the long-term financial future of the football club. The ability of the proposal to fund the delivery of the AGP's and MUGA's was based on the residential element of the scheme not providing any affordable housing. For the reasons set out in Section 6 of this report, the scheme has been amended to include the provision of affordable housing (40%), but this has resulted in the AGP's and MUGA's no longer being proposed, and instead providing improvements to the existing football pitch. Amendments to the scheme have also resulted in the removal of Block 2, with Block 1 being slightly enlarged to contain 25 apartments, amendments to the design and appearance of the apartment block and amendments to include visitor parking.

- 1.5 In the absence of the AGP's and MUGA's, Didcot Town Football Club wish to have the apartment block constructed on the site so that capital arising from the development can be reinvested back into the club. This is to secure its long-term future financially and enable the club to remain on its current premises. Whilst providing context, this does not form a material consideration in the determination of the application and the proposal for the apartment block should be considered on its merit in accordance with the relevant Local Plan policies.
- 1.6 The amended scheme includes improvements to the current grass pitch on the site (outside of the stadium), as set out above in Para 1.2. These are not contingent on the delivery of the proposed apartments and can be considered on their own merits and are mutually exclusive to the proposed apartments.
- 1.7 The final set of amended plans are as follows and these are **attached** as Appendix B:
 - Location Plan and Block Plan 1128-P01- Rev E
 - Site Plan 1128-P10-Rev E
 - Ground Floor Plan 1128-P11-Rev B
 - First Floor Plan 1128 -P12-Rev B
 - Second Floor Plan 1128-P13-Rev A
 - Third Floor Plan 1128-P14-Rev A
 - Elevations 1128-P15-Rev A
 - Cycle and Bin Store Details 1128-P16 Rev A
 - Grass Football Pitch Details 1128-P17
 - Refuse Vehicle Tracking 7591_101 Rev C

2.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

2.1

Didcot Town Council	Objection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would result in significant change to the surrounding area • Proposed development would be out of keeping with surrounding development • Insufficient parking and visitor parking • The additional traffic would put increased strain on carpark and local cul-de-sacs • The extra traffic would generate an increase in noise for local residents • Proposed development would overlook windows of the adjacent health centre
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OCC Single Response	<p>Objection</p> <p>Application as amended (04/02/21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall number of car parking spaces to be provided is acceptable • However, control of use of visitor parking by means of lockable bollards not practical or appropriate <p>Application as amended (02/12/20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous objection on grounds of impact on the local highway network withdrawn • Insufficient provision of visitor parking • Control of use of visitor parking by means of lockable bollards not practical or appropriate <p>Application as amended (09/03/20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the local highway network • Insufficient provision of visitor car parking <p>Application as submitted (04/07/19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of additional traffic on the local highway network • Concerns over assessment of trip generation • Insufficient provision of car parking • Service vehicle swept path analysis required <p>A financial contribution of £795 per dwelling (RPIX May 2019) would be sought towards the improvement of the bus service within the Science Vale area.</p> <p>OCC Education have commented that given the nature of the development, it is not expected to have a significant impact on demand for school places in this area.</p>
Countryside Officer	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposals will result in the loss of two small areas of rough grassland and nettles of negligible ecological value. • There are no records for protected species that are likely to be relevant to this proposal.
Urban Design Officer	<p>Application as amended (08/02/21) – No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application proposals are supported <p>Application as amended (24/11/20) - objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building has now ‘carved out’ its own space, setting and a clear and defined curtilage with appropriate secure boundary treatments and private amenity • The building now has a considered composition incorporating a relevant pallet of materials, its composition works to provide visual interest in the context of the site and ensure a well presented and discernible character of its own • Unacceptable balconies have been introduced on the first floor of the south facing elevation which should be removed • The signage indicated above the main entrance is unnecessary and commercial in scale and should be removed

	<p>Application as amended (28/08/20) – objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme has improved its boundary treatments and landscaping across the site necessary for the scheme to ‘carve out’ its own space, setting a clear and defined curtilage • This sets a greater quality for the residential amenity at ground floor making the space more defensible and appropriately private • The building design approach has developed using a simpler form and breaking up its massing through recessing and projecting sections of the building. The material choice is a lighter tone pallet which works with this approach, however the building lacks detailing and composition of these elements and appears overly simplified • Additional detail or ‘re-skinning’ the building in an appropriate balance of architectural features/material along with the current changes would satisfy the policy context from a design perspective <p>Application as amended (20/03/20) – objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite its simplified form which begins to mitigate its scale and bulk, the overall design and detailing of the building is limited, with little articulation of character or a specific vernacular • the lack of true and robust integration with its immediate surrounding context creates a sense of ‘lack-lustre’ design • Currently the scheme does not show how it address its edges with any defined boundary treatments <p>Application as submitted (20/03/19) - objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme requires definition to establish its curtilage and architectural presence to differentiate the development from the football grounds and ensure a high-quality design response to its context • The scheme needs to focus on its boundary treatments and landscaping, initially, to establish itself as a standalone site and be viewed and read as such within the surrounding built environment
Drainage	<p>No objections – subject to conditions</p> <p>Application as amended (10/03/20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage details of re-laid football pitch to be included as part of SuDS details to be approved prior to commencement of development <p>Application as submitted (08/03/19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed development appropriate in terms of flood risk planning • Foul drainage details and details of SuDS to be approved prior to commencement of development
Forestry Officer	<p>No objections – subject to conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed development would not impact on any trees of arboricultural significance • Tree protection details and landscape details can be approved via condition

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape scheme should include arrange of long lived large canopy trees and hedges and shrubs to soften the visual appearance of the building and its surrounding area
Landscape Officer	<p>Comment as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant should provide details for hard and soft landscape proposals and landscape details. Request a condition to provide a landscape maintenance and management plan.
Air Quality	<p>No objections – subject to conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EV charging points to be provided – 1 for every 10 flats Sustainable travel pack to be provided to residents Secure cycle parking storage should be provided
Contaminated Land	<p>No objection – subject to condition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential sources for land contamination have been identified as a result of the former sewage works leading to recommendations for intrusive ground investigations including gas monitoring To ensure that any land contamination risks are addressed a condition is required to secure a phased risk assessment and remediation strategy
Environmental Protection	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern initially raised over proximity of Block 2 to the football and associated noise and disturbance to future occupiers Block 2 has been removed from the proposals and concerns over noise have been addressed
Leisure	<p>No objection – subject to confirmation from Sport England that the proposed car parking for the playing pitch is acceptable</p>
Housing	<p>Application as amended - no objection The amended plans submitted with the application together with the layout and tenure, are acceptable and correspond with the 40% affordable housing requirement. Although, the tenure mix submitted varies slightly from policy, this mix was agreed in order to achieve affordable housing delivery on-site as opposed to a commuted sum payment.</p> <p>Application as submitted – comments as follows The proposal indicates a nil contribution towards affordable housing. However, there are options available to ensure affordable housing is either provided on site or a commuted sum to enable to the provision of affordable housing elsewhere in the district:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option 1: Instead of the 75% rent and 25% shared ownership split, we will seek all 10 affordable units to be delivered on site as shared ownership only Option 2: A commuted sum amount of £821,700 to be received in lieu of affordable housing provision on site.
Building Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SAP calculations provided for Flats 1, 10, 21 and 24 show that a 40% reduction in carbon emissions would be achieved compared with a code 2013 Building Regulations compliant base

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that as designed SAP calculations are provided for each individual flat to demonstrate that the policy requirements can be achieved across the whole development
Thames Water	<p>Comments as follows</p> <p>Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing foul and surface water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the development. A condition is requested restricting occupation until network upgrades have been delivered or a housing and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with Thames Water</p>
Waste Management	<p>Refuse vehicle tracking based on smaller vehicle and needs to be amended and resubmitted</p>
Sport England	<p>Application as amended – no objection</p> <p>The proposed apartments do not impact any part of the playing pitches The playing pitch improvements and proposed car parking meet exception 2 of Sport England playing field policy as they are ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and would not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or adversely affect their use</p> <p>Application as submitted - holding objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive of the full size 3G pitch however further work is needed to demonstrate the need for the two MUGA's and small sized 3G pitch3 AGP Detailed information should be provided of the specification of the pitches to ensure compliance with FA standards
Crime Prevention Advisor	<p>Comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better oversight of the car parking area should be provided by increasing size of windows in east and south elevation Appropriate boundary treatment should be provided Cycle parking for residents should be secure Communal entrance should not be recessed An access control / entry system must be provided A secure post / delivery system must be provided Lighting of communal areas should be 24 hour controlled by photoelectric cells
Ladygrove Park Primary School	<p>Objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in parking spaces and increase in residential car parking will have a detrimental impact on the local community Increase in number of cars on local road network – roads are already unable to cope with current number particularly at peak times During construction phase construction traffic will contribute to noise pollution and reduced air quality The need for such dense development which is not in keeping with design of surrounding area is not clear Some trees may impinge of street lighting in the future Future occupiers may experience noise pollution from the football club

Oak Tree Health Centre	Objection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper floors of proposed four-storey block would have unhindered line of sight into GPs' consulting rooms - unreasonable to resort to closing of blinds during consultations Car park adjacent to the Health Centre can be extremely busy - proposed changes to the car park significantly deplete the current parking spaces available
Neighbours	Objections (156) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new housing is not needed There is enough new housing elsewhere in Didcot Currently not enough parking for doctors' practice and leisure centre There is not enough parking when a big match is played Reduced parking for leisure centre and health centre Not enough parking for proposed flats Estate roads used by commuters Car park currently used for school pick up and drop off Loss of green space Proposed building too large and out of keeping with surrounding character Over development of the site Building will overshadow homes Flats will overlook nearby homes and the primary school Impact on wildlife Impact on local infrastructure Building would be close to windows of the doctor's surgery Noise from football ground Support (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is currently wasteland Didcot has a shortfall of 1 and 2 bed apartments Site is in a sustainable location with good access to London, Reading, Oxford and Swindon Primary school should encourage car free travel

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 [P11/W1065/DC](#) - Approved (09/11/2011)

Construction of an artificial turf pitch with sports fencing and floodlighting (As clarified by applicant's e-mail of 18 August 2011 & as clarified by applicant's email of 16 September 2011).

[P10/W1425/PD](#) - Other Outcome (15/10/2010)

Proposed extension to the skate park

[P10/W0080](#) - Approved (08/03/2010)

Erection of boundary fencing and 1 no terrace stand to training pitch. Extension of existing terraces to main pitch and 1 no. free standing terrace. South facing fencing to main pitch moved. Service yard/children's area created in main pitch premises.

[P03/W0719](#) - Approved (01/10/2003)

Erection of boundary fencing and 1 no terrace stand to training pitch. Extension of existing terraces to main pitch and 1 no. free standing terrace. South facing fencing to main pitch moved. Service yard/Children's area created in main pitch premises.

[P02/W0270](#) - Approved (14/05/2002)
Extension to new community centre.

[P01/W0130](#) - Approved (18/04/2001)
New community facility and associated parking. (As amended by drawing 23C deposited on 9 April 2001).

[P00/W0357/RM](#) - Approved (02/08/2000)
Erection of new surgery building.

[P99/W0044/O](#) - Approved (07/07/1999)
Erection of a new surgery.

[P98/W0790](#) - Approved (06/01/1999)
Proposed sports centre including sports hall, community facilities, artificial turf pitch, tennis courts, changing rooms and floodlighting. (As amplified by letter from agent dated 9.12.98, 22.12.98 and 4.1.99 and enclosures).

[P98/W0330](#) - Approved (29/05/1998)
Club house, changing rooms, stand and banqueting facility for football club.

[P97/W0225](#) - Approved (30/06/1997)
Construction of access road to serve Didcot Town Football Club plus service road off Tyne Avenue. (As amended by drawings accompanying letter from applicant dated 3 June 1997 and by letter and form deposited on 25 June 1997).

[P97/W0070](#) - Approved (07/05/1997)
Development and use of land for sport and recreation to include a football stadium, sports pitches, associated buildings including changing rooms, park land, water features, access and parking. (As amended by applicants letter dated 4 April 1997 and accompanying plans).

[P95/W0589/DC](#) - Withdrawn (30/09/1996)
Change of use to a football pitch with ground works, fencing and floodlighting (as amplified by letter from North Crook Planning Ltd, dated 9th November 1995).

[P95/W0718/DC](#) - Approved (31/01/1996)
Football, rugby, hockey and junior football pitches, cricket pitch, netball and tennis courts and all-weather pitch. Floodlighting to football pitch. Fencing. (As amended by applicant on 23.1.96).

[P92/W0370/DC](#) - Approved (02/11/1992)
Use of land by Didcot Town Football Club for the purpose of a football ground for an initial period of three years

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 The proposed development is not listed in Schedule 1 of the 2017 Regulations (EIA required in every case). Urban development projects are listed in Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations, however the proposal is for less than 150 dwellings and the site is not located within a sensitive area. The proposal is therefore not Schedule 2 development that would require an EIA.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Development Plan Policies**

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) Policies:

STRAT1: The Overall Strategy

STRAT3: Didcot Garden Town

STRAT5: Residential Densities

H1: Delivering New Homes

H2: New Housing in Didcot

H9: Affordable Housing

H11: Housing Mix

ENV3: Biodiversity

ENV11: Pollution – Impact from existing and/ or previous land uses on new development

ENV12: Pollution – Impact of development on human health, the natural environment and/or local amenity (sources)

EP1: Air Quality

EP3: Waste Collection and Recycling

EP4: Flood Risk

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

DES3: Design and Access Statements

DES5: Outdoor Amenity Space

DES6: Residential Amenity

DES7: Efficient Use of Resources

DES8: Promoting Sustainable Design

DES10: Carbon Reduction

CF1: Safeguarding Community Facilities

TRANS4: Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans

TRANS5: Consideration of Development Proposals

5.2 **Neighbourhood Plan**

N/A.

5.3 **Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents**

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)

Developer Contributions SPD

Non-adopted Guidance

Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (October 2017)

The application proposals do not conflict with the proposals set out in the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan (shown as Ladygrove Park)

5.4 **National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance**

5.5 **Other Relevant Legislation**

Human Rights Act 1998

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this planning application the Council has regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 **The relevant planning considerations are the following:**

- **Principle of the development**
- **Provision of affordable housing**
- **Need for playing pitch**
- **Design and character**
- **Residential amenity**
 - **Provision of amenity space**
 - **Noise and lighting**
 - **Impact on neighbouring uses**
- **Access and Parking**
- **Impact on the local highway network**
- **Carbon Reduction**
- **Biodiversity**
- **Drainage**
- **Contaminated land**
- **Pitch improvements**

6.2 **Principle of the development**

Local Plan Policy STRAT1 provides the overall strategy for the district. Of relevance to this application, the policy focusses major new development in Science Vale including sustainable growth at Didcot Garden Town and Culham so that this area can play an enhanced role in providing homes, jobs and services with improved transport connectivity. Local Plan Policy H1 stems from the overall strategy and relates to proposals for residential development on land that is not specifically allocated for development in the plan. Part 3 (iii) of the policy states that development will be permitted if it is within the existing built up areas of towns and larger villages (as defined in the settlement hierarchy); provided an important open space of public; environmental, historical or ecological value is not lost nor an important public view harmed.

- 6.3 The application site is located within the existing built up area of the town of Didcot and its development would not result in the loss of an important open space of public; environmental, historical or ecological value nor the loss of or harm to an important public view. The open grassed land that forms part of the application is unused rough grass land of limited amenity and ecological value. The principle of the development is therefore in accordance with Local Plan Policies STRAT1 and H1. In addition to this, the site is located in a sustainable location, within walking and cycling distance of Didcot town centre and railway station.

6.4 **Provision of affordable housing**

The proposals would result in a net gain of 10 or more dwellings and as such triggers the requirement for the provision of affordable housing (40% provision) as set out in Local Plan Policy H9. As submitted, the scheme did not propose to provide any affordable housing. The application sought a relaxation of the Council's affordable housing policy in order to maximise the capital receipt from the proposal. This was intended to enable the delivery of a full-size artificial grass pitch (AGP), a half size AGP and two MUGA's on the football club site. Revenue generated from the use of these pitches would help to secure the long-term financial viability of the football club.

- 6.5 Local Plan Policy H9 (i) states that where it can be adequately demonstrated that the level of affordable housing being sought would be unviable, alternative tenure mixes and levels of affordable housing may be considered. Viability information provided as

part of the application demonstrated that the provision of affordable housing would not render the development of the flats themselves unviable, rather this would prejudice the delivery of the AGP's and MUGA's and intended maintenance works to the stadium building. Such viability considerations (assisting the long-term financial viability of the football club) do not fall within the flexibility provided by Policy H9 and would not constitute sufficient reason to forego the Local Plan requirement for the delivery of affordable housing as part of new residential development.

- 6.6 The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (2018) identifies a need for a full-size AGP at Didcot. The provision of such a facility as part of this application would therefore be advantageous. However, Sport England (in consultation with the Football Foundation and Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Football Association) raised a holding objection to the scheme proposals. The Football Association were supportive of the full-size AGP. However, they commented that further work is required to identify the need for half-sized AGP and MUGA's including the preparation of a detailed usage programme. They also raised the need to consider the effective management and maintenance of these facilities. This is relevant to Sport England as this element of the proposals would involve the development of existing pitches. Accordingly, Sport England need to be satisfied that the proposed development would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the existing playing field. This holding objection has not been addressed.
- 6.7 The Council's Playing Pitch strategy anticipates provision of a full size AGP to be made as part of the Valley Park development or potentially as part of the leisure provision on the Didcot North East site. As alternative locations are envisaged in the Playing Pitch Strategy and given the holding objection of Sport England, the provision of a full-size AGP (whilst advantageous) would similarly not constitute sufficient reason to forego the Local Plan requirement for the delivery of affordable housing as part of new residential development.
- 6.8 Accordingly, the application proposals have been amended. The proposed development of 25 flats would now include 10 flats as shared ownership representing 40% provision of affordable housing. The Council's Housing Team both suggested and are content with the affordable provision being all in the form of on-site shared ownership and would prefer this to a financial contribution being provided to go towards off-site delivery. The provision of the affordable housing as part of the scheme will be secured through a S106 Agreement. The application proposals have been amended as a result and the full-size artificial grass pitch (AGP), a half size AGP and two MUGA's are no longer included in the application. Improvements to the existing grass pitch (outside of the stadium) are proposed instead.
- 6.9 **Design and character**
The design, layout and appearance of the scheme has undergone several amendments since the application was submitted, following advice from the Council's Urban Design Officer. One of the key considerations was the need for the scheme to define its curtilage and establish itself as a standalone residential plot rather than appearing as an ad-hoc development within the grounds and context of the football club. The boundaries of the site have been improved and are now more formally defined and defensible with the use of 1.2 and 1.8 metre high brick walls, 1.2 and 1.5 metre high railings and hedgerow planting. The Urban Design Officer has commented that the boundary treatment for the site is now acceptable and sufficiently delineates the site from the adjacent open expanse of surface car parking.
- 6.10 The appearance and architectural style of the building has also been significantly amended. The building as submitted, took design cues from the surrounding residential

development with the use of red and orange brick detailing and tiled gabled roofs. However, the application site is set apart from the existing residential housing on Ladygrove, being set within the grounds of the football club and between the football stadium, the leisure centre and the health centre. The football stadium is a single storey flat roofed building incorporating red and buff brick banding. The Willowbrook Leisure Centre is equivalent to four-storey in height with red brick plinth base and corrugated steel low pitch roof. The health centre consists of a two-storey red brick building with some light render banding. This makes it difficult for the building to successfully emulate the existing residential vernacular (extending it into the football club site) and to any of the prevailing character of the football club site and associated uses immediately adjacent.

- 6.11 To this end, the Council's Urban Design Officer advised that the proposed building should define its own space and establish its own character. A more simplified architectural form with a more contemporary vernacular was recommended to ensure the building could stand alone and establish a 'sense of place' and define its position as a standalone development. Visual interest and detailing has been added to the building with a palette of materials to include the use of a light coloured render, grey coloured fibre cement board panelling and red/ orange facing brick. The facing brick would be common to the surrounding area and the white and grey tone of the render and cement panelling would complement the light grey tone of leisure centre. The brick and light render would also complement the health centre. The Urban Design Officer has commented that the design, scale, massing and vernacular of the proposed building now borrows enough from the limited surrounding context while successfully establishing its own character. The application proposals therefore accord with Local Plan Policy DES2: Enhancing Local Character. The materials should be approved via condition.
- 6.12 In accordance with Policy H11 of the SOLP 2035, the proposed bedrooms for the apartments accord with the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards. Policy H11 also requires a percentage of dwellings be designed to meet the Building Regulations Part M(4) Categories 2 and 3 requirement for accessible and adaptable dwellings and wheelchair accessible dwellings. These matters can be secured through conditions.
- 6.13 Density
Local Plan Policy STRAT5, which relates to residential densities, requires the optimal use of land to be made. It further states that sites well related to existing towns and served by public transport or good accessibility by foot or bicycle to the town centre of Didcot should be capable of accommodating development at higher densities. It is expected that such sites accommodate densities of more than 45 dph (net) unless this would conflict with delivering a high-quality design or other justified reasons for lower densities.
- 6.14 The application site is located within Didcot and is within walking and cycling distance of the town centre and the railway station (both a distance of 900m). The application site is served by public transport (Avon Way and Cow Lane) which operate during weekday mornings. More frequent bus services are available at the railway station. Given this sustainable location, higher densities are warranted in accordance with Policy STRAT5.
- 6.15 The application proposals for 25 apartments on the site (the part of the site to accommodate the apartments and associated parking etc as opposed to the larger application red line area) would result in a net density of 92 dph. Adequate amenity space is provided on the site as is car parking and visitor parking for the future residents in accordance with the Council's and County Council's standards. As such,

the quality of the development is not unduly impacted by the proposed density of the development. Given the sustainable location of the site, I consider the proposed density of the development to accord with Policy STRAT5.

6.16 Landscaping

The site plan (drwg. no. 1128-P10-D) shows the intended landscaping for the site which is considered to be acceptable. A condition will be required to secure and approved a detailed planting plan and landscape management plan.

6.17 Block 2

The application as submitted included a smaller block in the north-eastern corner of the site (Block 2) to comprise of two x two-bedroom apartments. Set in a remote corner of the site, in close proximity to the football stadium and adjacent to a large area of surface car parking, this would not a suitable location for residential apartments. They would relate poorly to adjacent uses, would be isolated, generally appear out of place and would not create a high-quality living environment. These apartments have now been removed from the application proposals.

6.18 Residential amenity

Provision of amenity space

Policy DES5 requires the provision of private or shared outdoor amenity space for all new residential dwellings. Standards for amenity space are set out in the Council's Design Guide. This requires 35m² of amenity space for a 1 bedroom flat and 50m² for a 2-bedroom flat. For the number of apartments proposed, this equates to an area of 1,145 m² of amenity space. A communal garden area of around 1,000m² is proposed and two of the apartments would have a roof terrace measuring 177m². The Design Guide standards are therefore met. The site is also in close proximity (walking distance) to existing green infrastructure including the Ladygrove Loop, Ladygrove Hill and the Ladygrove Lakes.

6.19 Noise and lighting

The application site is on the grounds of the Didcot Football Club. This is a use that generates noise when matches are being played and has the associated issue of light spill from the stadium flood lights to consider. The applicant has advised that it is the football club's first team games that generate significant numbers of supporters and this team only plays about 28 league cup games at home each season, mostly on Saturday afternoons. The apartments would also be situated adjacent to the Willowbrook Leisure Centre.

6.20 The Council's Environmental Protection Officer raised concern with the application as submitted over the proximity of Block 2 to football stadium. This was on the grounds of noise disturbance to the future occupiers of the Block 2 apartments. As Block 2 has subsequently been removed from the application proposals, the Environmental Protection Officer has confirmed that he has no further concerns and any impact on Block 1 would be minimal. No concerns have been raised by the Environmental Protection Officer over the flood lighting associated with the football stadium and any harmful impact this would have on the future occupiers of Block 1. It is noted that the flood lighting on the football pitch outside the stadium is closer to properties on Bowmont Water (40m) than the stadium flood lights would be to proposed Block 1 (60m).

6.21 Impact on neighbouring uses

Concerns have been raised over the proximity of the proposed apartments to the Oak Tree Health Centre. Standards for the separation distances for buildings are set out in Council's Design Guide. The Design Guide requires a back-to-back distance between

habitable rooms of 25 metres and a back-to-side-distance between habitable rooms and the side elevation of an adjacent building of 12 metres.

- 6.22 The rear elevation of the proposed apartment block would face the side elevation of the Oak Tree Health Centre. The side elevation of the health centre has windows at first floor level. The closest of these windows would serve an area used as offices and a distance of 15 metres would separate the windows. This distance is considered to be acceptable, given the relationship of the uses i.e. habitable rooms of the proposed block and office accommodation in the health centre.
- 6.23 The side elevation of the health centre also has first floor windows that serve treatment rooms. A distance of 23 metres (at its closest point) would separate these windows. The treatment rooms will be used during the opening hours of the health centre. Whilst this is not a relationship between 'habitable rooms', given the nature of treatment rooms and the need for privacy, a similar distance to that required between habitable rooms would be appropriate. The separation distance is therefore considered to be acceptable. The Council's Urban Design Officer has commented the distance between the windows of the proposed apartment block and those of the health centre accord with the requirements of the Design Guide.
- 6.24 A distance of 42 metres would separate the windows on the side elevation of the proposed block and residential properties on Bowmont Water. This is sufficient to prevent any issues of overlooking or loss of privacy to properties on Bowmont Water from these windows. The two third floor flats would benefit from a roof terrace. One of these roof terraces would be west facing and face the frontage properties on Bowmont Water. A distance of 47 metres would separate the roof terrace and this is considered to be sufficient to prevent any issue of overlooking or loss of privacy to the existing properties.
- 6.25 **Access and parking**
Access
The access to the apartment block would be via the existing vehicular access into the football club site via Bowmont Water. The County Council as Local Highway Authority have raised no objection to this. The Council's Waste Officer has commented that the refuse vehicle tracking is based on a smaller vehicle than that used by the Council i.e. a vehicle of 11.2 metres in length as opposed 11.6 metres in length. Whilst the tracking drawing contained in the Transport Assessment (7591_101) refers to a refuse vehicle 1.2 metres in length, this is a typo. The key shows the overall length of the refuse vehicle as 11.6 metres. The drawing is also a scaled drawing at 1:500. The length of the refuse vehicle associated with the vehicle tracking measures 11.6 metres. With the removal of Bock 2, a refuse vehicle can access the refuse storage area for Block 1 from the main access road into the football club site. Notwithstanding this, the applicant has submitted a revised refuse vehicle tracking (drawing no. 7591_101 Rev C) which is included as part of Appendix B. The Council's Waste Officer has confirmed that this is acceptable.
- 6.26 Parking
With the application as submitted, the county council raised an objection on the basis of insufficient visitor car parking provision. Based on the county council residential car parking standards, one allocated space should be provided per flat (one or two bed flat) along with 14 unallocated / visitor car parking. The equates to a total of 25 allocated spaces to be provided and 14 unallocated visitor car parking spaces. The application has been amended to provide 26 allocated car parking spaces and 14 unallocated / visitor car parking spaces. The proposals therefore now comply with the required

number of spaces to be provided and the county council have confirmed that this is acceptable.

- 6.27 The county council, however, maintain their objection on the grounds of visitor car parking provision. This is because the visitor parking bays would be provided within the existing car parking area used by the football club and controlled by lockable bollards. The county council do not consider this method of control to be acceptable due to the practicality of use and state that it would be unlikely that these parking spaces could / would be retained exclusively for the use of the development at all times.
- 6.28 The visitor car parking bays would be delineated as separate from the general wider car parking area using raised kerbs, a different surface texture and signage. I consider that lockable bollards, used correctly, would be sufficient to ensure that the parking bays are used solely for visitors related to the proposed apartments. The application proposes an acceptable number of car parking spaces and the issues relate to management. This is not a concern that warrants refusal of the application.
- 6.29 Concerns have been raised that the proposals would result in a loss of general parking on the site for the use of the football club, leisure centre, health centre and school pick up / drop off. Currently, there are 188 car parking spaces on the site. A total 54 of these spaces are for the use of the Willowbrook Leisure centre and 38 of the spaces are located in a rectangular shaped parking area to the north of the leisure centre (on the other side of the access road). A further 16 spaces are located on the northern and eastern boundary of the leisure centre. These form part of the parking provision approved for the leisure centre as part of planning permission P01/W0130 and this plan is **attached** at Appendix C to this report. Other than an ambulance bay and two parking spaces for the mobility impaired, the Oak Tree health centre does not have any specific parking bays attributed to it. Planning permission P00/W0357 indicates that the general car parking area on the football club site is to be used by visitors to the health centre. The rest of the car parking provision on the site is for the use of the football club.
- 6.30 The rectangular shaped car parking area associated with the leisure centre (38 spaces) would be developed as part of the development proposals. However, 40 new car parking spaces would be provided as part of a new car parking area located to the south of the football stadium. The 16 spaces associated with the leisure centre on its northern and eastern boundary would remain. Notwithstanding the submitted block plan (1128-P01-E) indicating that 11 car parking spaces would be allocated for the leisure centre, the applicant has confirmed that the new 40 car parking spaces would be available at all times and access to it would not be restricted by the use of gates. The applicant has also confirmed that the parking for the leisure centre would not be limited to the 11 spaces shown on the block plan. As such, there would not be any reduction in the number of car parking spaces available for use in association with the leisure centre. A condition would be required to ensure that the new provision of 40 car parking spaces are available as general parking at all times and the 16 spaces on the northern and eastern boundary of the leisure centre remain open for use by visitors to the leisure centre.
- 6.31 The new provision of 40 car parking spaces would involve the development of part of the football club site used as playing pitches. Sport England have confirmed that this would be acceptable as proposed car parking would meet one of their exception tests set out in their playing field policy. This is that the car parking would be ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and would not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or adversely affect their use.

- 6.32 As part of providing the apartment block and associated car parking area on the site, 11 of the existing car parking bays would be lost. A further 14 would be used to provide the visitor parking associated with the apartment block and 9 would be lost through the re-arrangement of the existing parking layout. Therefore, 34 existing car parking bays on the football club site would be lost. With the 40 spaces being provided to replace the 38 currently associated with the leisure centre, a total of 32 existing car parking spaces would be lost.
- 6.33 This would leave 156 spaces for the use of the football club, leisure centre and health centre. Demand for parking in association with the football club will be at its highest when the clubs first team games are played (28 home games per season usually on a Saturday). On the occasions I have visited the site (during the day), the majority of the car parking is available.
- 6.34 The parking on the site is used for the pick-up and drop-off of children to the nearby Ladygrove Park Primary School. This is certainly beneficial and helps reduce parking on the nearby residential roads. However, with 156 car parking spaces remaining on the site, I am of the opinion that a sufficient number will still be available to assist with the pick-up and drop-off associated with the school alongside the parking needs of the football club, leisure centre and health centre. The football club could potentially decide to restrict their car parking being used for this activity at any time. It would, therefore, not be justifiable to refuse planning permission for the proposed development for this reason.
- 6.35 Whilst there would be an overall reduction of 32 general car parking spaces on the site, I am not of the opinion that this is sufficient reason to warrant the refusal of the application. The site is located in a sustainable location within walking distance of Didcot railway station and the bus services available there. Alternative means of transport are therefore available to access the site, particularly when demand is highest on home match days.
- 6.36 Bicycle parking
Secure and covered cycle storage would be provided as part of the development, conveniently located at the front of the building close to the main entrance. The covered cycle store would be discreet, being screened behind proposed hedge planting.
- 6.37 **Impact on the local highway network**
The county council originally objected to the proposed development due to the impact on the highway network. Parts of the highway network in and around Didcot are at capacity and experience high levels of congestion. Any increase in vehicle traffic on the highway network was considered unacceptable in the absence of the highway mitigation measures intended to be delivered through the Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF). However, since these comments were made, contracts in relation to the funding the HIF projects have been signed and delivery programme of work identified. The county council has therefore reviewed its position. Based on the minimal traffic generation associated with the proposals (6 and 7 two way trips in the AM and PM peak hours) and the sustainable location of the site and good pedestrian and cycle links to Didcot town centre and the railway station, the county council have removed this objection.
- 6.38 To mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the local road network, the county council are requesting a financial contribution towards the improvement of the bus services within the Science Vale area. The requested contribution is for £795 per dwelling (RPIX May 2019). This will be secured through a S106 Agreement.

6.39 Carbon Reduction

Since the application was submitted, the Local Plan 2035 has been adopted. Policy DES10 requires residential development to achieve a 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared with a code 2013 Building Regulation compliant base case. The applicant has submitted an Energy Statement in accordance with the requirements of DES10.

- 6.40 The Energy Statement accords with the guidance in the Council's Policy DES10 Advice Note, which advocates a 'fabric first' approach before considering the use of renewable / low carbon technologies. The fabric of the building has been improved with levels of insulation (internal and external walls, floors and roof) and high-performance glazing that exceed the U-Values required by the Building Regulations. In addition to this, air source heat pumps will be used to provide hot water for heating and roof mounted solar photovoltaic panels will be installed for electricity generation.
- 6.41 The Energy Statement includes SAP calculations setting out the Dwelling Emission Rates (DER) and Target Emission Rates (TER) figures for four of the proposed apartments. These show that for each apartment the DER (building as designed) achieves a 40% reduction in carbon emissions ($\text{CO}_2 \text{ Kg/m}^2$) over the TER (based on meeting code 2013 Building Regulations). The Council's Building Control Manager has confirmed that this has been correctly calculated. The Building Control Manager has recommended that the SAP calculations be provided for each of the apartments to demonstrate policy compliance across the whole development.
- 6.42 In response to this, the applicant has commented that the SAP calculations are based on samples of four apartments out of the 25 chosen in order to satisfy variable parameters such as apartment type, floor levels orientation and floor area percentage reflecting the whole development. As such, there is not a need to provide the SAP calculations for each apartment. The apartments are reasonably uniform in their configuration and taking account of the applicant's reasoning for selecting the representative apartments, I am of the opinion that the SAP calculations are sufficient to demonstrate that the development can comply with the requirements Policy DES10. However, to ensure this is the case, a condition is required to secure the submission of the SAP calculations for the remaining apartments prior to commencement of development. Furthermore, a condition is also required to secure an Energy Statement Verification Report prior to first occupation, to demonstrate the required energy efficiency / renewable energy measures have been implemented.
- 6.43 The applicant has confirmed that the roof area provided as part of the proposed development would be of sufficient size to accommodate the required 15.0 KWp solar photovoltaic array (approximately 43 panels). The solar panels would be located on the roof of Apartments 24 and 25. An air source heat pump unit would be provided for each apartment. The applicant has advised that these heat pumps could be grouped together in an external store or on a flat roof are to minimise the visual impact. The solar array and air source heat pumps would constitute development that requires planning permission, the details of which are not included as part of the current application. As such, a condition will be required to approve the details of the solar array and heat pumps and include them as part of the planning permission
- 6.44 The Council's Air Quality Officer has raised no objection to the application. They have requested that electric vehicle charging points are provided (1 for every 10 flats) and that a Travel Information Pack is prepared and provided to the residents of the apartments. These can be secured via conditions.

6.45 Ecology

The Council's Ecologist has raised no objection to the scheme. He has commented that the development would result in the (part) loss of an area rough grassland and nettles of negligible ecological value. The Council's Ecologist is satisfied the application proposals would accord with Policy ENV3: Biodiversity.

6.46 Drainage

The Council's Drainage Engineer has raised no objection to the application proposals subject to conditions. Drainage details have not been provided as part of the application but given the location and proximity of the site to existing drainage infrastructure in the locality, details can be approved via conditions. These would require detailed surface water drainage details and a detailed foul water drainage scheme to be submitted for approval prior to commencement.

- 6.47 Thames Water have commented that there is a (potential) inability of the existing foul and surface water infrastructure to accommodate the development. As such, Thames Water request a condition that no properties are occupied until confirmation has been provided that either:- all wastewater network upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows from the development have been completed; or- a housing and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with Thames Water to allow additional properties to be occupied. Where a housing and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed housing and infrastructure phasing plan.

- 6.48 The applicant has queried this with Thames Water, enquiring what network upgrades may be required. Thames Water have commented that upon receipt of a site survey for utilities, they would then model and advise if any enhancements are needed. It is possible that the development could connect directly into the main sewer which runs into Bowmont Water. Thames Water would be obliged to provide any network upgrade to accommodate the development. The purpose of the condition is to ensure that this is provided prior to the occupation of the apartments or that the occupation of the apartments is phased in agreement of Thames Water. The applicant is content with the condition requested by Thames Water.

6.49 Contaminated land

A Phase 1 (desk based) contaminated land study has been submitted with application at the request of the Council's Contaminated Land Officer. This highlights that the site was previously used as a sewage works, operating since 1899. The former sewage works have been disused since 1975. This raises the potential for ground contamination from this previous use. Accordingly, the Contaminated Land Officer has requested conditions be placed on the planning permission. The first of these require a Phase 2 assessment to be carried, prior to the commencement of development, to determine if any contamination on the site is present. If any contamination is present, a remediation strategy is to be prepared and approved to ensure the site is suitable for residential use. The second condition requires that any approved remediation strategy is carried out prior to the occupation of any of the apartments.

6.50 Pitch improvements

In addition to the proposed apartments, the application proposes some improvements to the football pitch to the south of the Willowbrook Leisure Centre. These improvements involve the drainage of the pitch, upgraded floodlights and dugouts and perimeter fencing. These improvements are considered to be acceptable in principle, however, no details of these have been provided as part of the application submission. These details would therefore need to be secured and approved via condition.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.51 The Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 1 April 2016. With the exception of the affordable apartments, any additional floor space is CIL liable at a rate of £182.18 per sq.m (index linked).

S106 and planning obligations

6.52 Affordable housing provision

- 40% (shared ownership)

6.53 Transport

- £795 per dwelling (RPIX May 2019) would be sought towards the improvement of the bus service within the Science Vale area.

6.54 Waste and recycling

- £186 per apartment (Index RPIX October 2019)

- 6.55 OCC Education have commented that given the nature of the development it is not expected to have a significant impact on demand for school places in this area. Accordingly, no mitigation is sought.

Pre-commencement conditions

- 6.56 The applicant has confirmed that they agree to suggested pre-commencement conditions.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The application site is located in a sustainable location in close proximity to Didcot Town Centre and the Didcot Railway Station. The proposal for 25 apartments in this location (i.e. within the built up area of Didcot) accords with the overall spatial strategy (Policy STRAT1) and the approach for delivering new homes in the district (Policy H1) set out in the Local Plan 2035.
- 7.2 The proposed development would accord with the Council's requirements for the provision of affordable housing. The design and appearance of the apartment block is acceptable and accords with the design related policies (DES1 and DES2) of the Local Plan. Adequate amenity provision would be provided for future occupiers and the proposals would not result in an unacceptable harm to adjacent uses, including the Oak Tree Health Centre.
- 7.3 Adequate parking (including visitor parking) would be provided and the proposals would not result in a harmful impact to the local road network. Whilst there would be a slight reduction in the car parking provided on the site (from 188 spaces to 156), I consider that sufficient parking would remain for the operation of the football club, the Willowbrook Leisure Centre and Oak Tree Health Centre. The suggested conditions would ensure that the Willowbrook Centre would not experience a reduction in car parking available for its use.
- 7.4 When considered against the policies in Development Plan, the proposal accords with these and represents a sustainable form of development. As such, there are no valid reasons to withhold planning permission.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

Planning permission subject to a completed S106 legal agreement securing obligations highlighted in the report and the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement**
- 2. Approved plans**

3. Sample materials (prior to commencement)
4. Landscaping – planting plan (prior to commencement)
5. Landscape management plan
6. Tree protection details to be approved (prior to commencement)
7. Hours of operation – construction/demolition
8. Control of noise and dust (prior to commencement)
9. Air Quality – scheme for EV charging points
10. New car parking available at all times
11. SAP calculations for all apartments (prior to commencement)
12. Details of photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps (prior to commencement)
13. Energy Statement Verification Report
14. Detailed foul water drainage scheme (prior to commencement)
15. Detailed surface water drainage scheme (prior to commencement)
16. Thames Water – water network upgrade / phasing plan
17. Details of pitch drainage, floodlighting, dugouts and perimeter fencing
18. Travel information pack
19. Construction Traffic Management Plan (prior to commencement)
20. Parking for flats to be provided prior to occupation and retained
21. Part M (4) Category 2
22. Contaminated Land Condition 1 (prior to commencement)
23. Contaminated Land Condition 2

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