

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P15/S2159/O</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	OUTLINE
<b>REGISTERED</b>	26.6.2015
<b>PARISH</b>	DIDCOT
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Margaret Davies Margaret Turner Alan Thompson Anthony Dearlove Anthony Nash
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Didcot Development Manager SODC
<b>SITE</b>	Car Park Station Road Didcot, OX11 7NN
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Outline planning application for demolition of existing buildings and a mixed use development comprised of up to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 300 residential units (use class C3);</li> <li>• a 70-bed hotel (use class C1);</li> <li>• up to 800sqm gym (use class D2);</li> <li>• up to 2,400sqm retail uses (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5);</li> <li>• up to 1,800 sqm commercial office floorspace (use class B1);</li> <li>• a replacement nursery school (use class D1); and</li> <li>• a decked car park.</li> </ul> Closure of Lydalls Road to allow for redevelopment and altered pedestrian access. All matters are reserved except for new means of vehicular access to the site.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amended plans submitted on 04.12.15 including:</li> <li>• Air quality report</li> <li>• Arboricultural report</li> <li>• Proposed car park drawings</li> <li>• Revised Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</li> <li>• Revised masterplan</li> <li>• Addendum Transport Assessment</li> </ul>
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	452553/190420
<b>OFFICER</b>	Emily Hamerton

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This planning application is referred to Planning Committee at the discretion of the Planning Manager as the council is the applicant.

1.2 This site is an area of land measuring some 4.35ha. The main body of the site area is a triangle bounded by Station Road, Lydalls Road and Haydon Road, however it also includes land to the north east adjacent to the railway and to the south east extending round onto Station Road. The site currently comprises a combination of a cleared site area secured by hoardings, a number of vacant buildings to the eastern tip of the site including the former Didcot Labour Club and a pair of Victorian terrace houses which have been used as offices and car parking. Existing uses on the site also includes:

- Prince of Wales public house
- Lydalls nursery school
- SOHA housing Ltd offices
- 3-5 Lydalls Road a pair of late Victorian / Edwardian houses which have been modified to create a single shop unit at ground floor and occupied by South and Vale Care Centre until May 2015. At first floor there are two residential flats
- Car rental office
- A number of former Great Western Railway buildings
- Surface level car parking

1.3 The site does not contain any statutory listed buildings and does not lie within a conservation area, however it is close to Didcot Station Road and Didcot Old Conservation Area and therefore this site can be considered as forming part of their immediate setting.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 This is an outline planning application with all matters reserved other than points of vehicular access for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the development of a mixed use scheme comprising:

- Up to 300 new residential units
- A replacement office building for SOHA Housing
- A replacement building and grounds for Lydalls Nursery (use class D1)
- A new 70 bed hotel (use class C1)
- Up to 2,400sqm of flexible net retail floorspace intended to accommodate convenience retail and café/restaurant/public house (use classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5)
- Associated uses such as a gym (use class D2)
- Car parking
- New decked parking to meet the requirements of the users of the scheme
- Closure of Lydalls Road to allow for redevelopment and altered pedestrian access.

2.2 Attached at **Appendix 1** is a copy of the site location plans and parameter plans. The remaining documents and plans listed in section 2.3 below can be viewed on the council's website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk).

2.3 Below is a list of the plans and documents which form part of this application.

### Plans

- Site Plan – 8150 895 / 6112 – development parameters
- Site Plan – 8150895 / 6110 – general arrangement ground floor
- Site Plan – 8150895 / 6111 – general arrangements upper floor
- Site Plan – 8150895 / 6113 – general arrangement height parameters
- Site location plan – 966\_00\_001\_P1
- Site Plan – demolition – 966\_01\_002\_P1
- Site Plan – existing – 966\_01\_001\_P1
- Site Plan – SODC ownership – 966\_01\_003\_P1
- Car multi-storey – levels 1 &2 – 8151103/6101
- Car multi-storey – levels 3 – 10 – 8151103/6102
- Cross section car park – 8151103/6103
- LVI – Haydon Road, Station Road, view 7
- Arboricultural Plan
- Arboricultural Plan rev A

- Arboricultural Plan – car park

Supporting documents

- Environmental Statement (includes LVI, technical reports and assessments)
- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Consultation statement
- Surface Water and Flood Risk Assessment
- Transport and Highway Technical Note Oct 2015
- Transport Assessment Nov 2015
- Air Quality Assessment Nov 2015
- Arboricultural Report Dec 2015
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment Dec 2015
- Bat survey

**2.4 Environmental Impact Assessment**

The application was accompanied by an Environmental Assessment. The proposed development is an urban development project falling within the category of 14 developments referred to in paragraph 10(b) of Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning 15(Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 as amended (“The Regulations”). Projects within this category require formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) if there are likely to be significant environmental impacts associated with them.

**2.5 The Environmental Statement considered the following topics as part of the assessment:**

- Traffic and transport
- Socio-economic effects
- Noise and vibration
- Air quality
- Bio-diversity
- Cultural heritage

The report identifies mitigation measures in response to the environmental effects detailed within the assessment.

**3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 The table below is a summary of the consultation responses received in relation to the original plans. A copy of the full response can be viewed on the Council’s website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk).

Original plans

Consultee	Summary
Didcot Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No strong views subject to:</li> <li>• The scheme recognising links to the history and heritage of the town</li> <li>• Ensuring assistance by way of a parking scheme to those residents affected by the loss of parking</li> <li>• The provision of a named officer to work with residents during the construction phase</li> <li>• Consideration for and satisfactory arrangements made to Prevent damage to existing local housing</li> </ul>
South Moreton Parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No strong views</li> </ul>

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Council	
Harwell Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns at the loss of parking for commuters. Building should be conditional on provision of replacement commuter parking</li> </ul>
Neighbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>29 letters of objection</li> <li>Concerned about height of buildings</li> <li>Objection to the loss of the Prince of Wales pub as a facility and heritage asset</li> <li>Concerned about traffic congestion on the local roads</li> <li>Parking appears limited on the site, concern it could lead to an increase in parking on nearby roads</li> <li>Concerned about loss of light and shadowing,</li> <li>Noise, disturbance and vibration during construction</li> <li>Development is out of keeping with the character of the area</li> <li>Objections to the loss of the pub</li> <li>Concerned about the width of Lydalls Road and potential parking along it</li> <li>Concerned about drop off and parking at the nursery</li> <li>No need for more hotels in Didcot</li> <li>Lack of parking strategy for residents</li> <li>Loss of privacy</li> <li>Concern about design, appearance and layout</li> <li>The proposal should take into account the views and concerns of nearby residents</li> <li>Important site which should not be developed without a specific policy</li> <li>Over – development</li> <li>Concerned about tree removal and lack of replacement planting</li> <li>Concerned about noise impact from proposed hotel</li> <li>Concern about light pollution from the site</li> <li>Development should be joined up with other developments that are happening elsewhere in Didcot</li> <li>This land should be given over as a park and not have more development on it</li> <li>3 letters of support</li> <li>The areas needs redevelopment</li> <li>This is a rundown area in need of modernisation</li> <li>This site forms a first impression of Didcot to people arriving via train and passing through</li> </ul>
SODC Countryside Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No known significant ecological constraints on the site</li> <li>The habitats are generally urban in nature and lack any nature conservation interest, surveys conducted in support of the application confirm this</li> <li>Surveys of the site show only potential is for roosting bats in the existing structures</li> </ul>
SODC – Environmental Health Officer – Contaminated Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No objection, condition recommended</li> </ul>
SODC – Environmental Health Officer – Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objection</li> <li>Additional information requested</li> </ul>

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Protection	
Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise consulting North Wessex Downs Conservation Board</li> <li>• Standing advice referred to</li> </ul>
Environmental Health Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No objection subject to conditions</li> </ul>
Environment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No objection subject to conditions</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objection due to lack of information on transport</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surface water drainage condition recommended</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Economy & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in employment on the site</li> <li>• Oxfordshire Skills Strategy has 5 strategic priorities which development need to have regard to.</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributions towards primary, secondary and SEN identified (please refer to S106 table)</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objection</li> <li>• Property would not object provided the applicant fully demonstrates through indicative drawings that the re-provision of the existing nursery school in terms of size, quality and external environment and potential growth can be met</li> <li>• A minimum site of 3,185sq.m in size for the relocation of Lydalls Nursery School – location and shape to be agreed with ability to expand</li> <li>• Direct delivery of the new nursery to OCC specifications – if not possible then financial contribution should be secured</li> <li>• Concern about the 2 storey design of building</li> <li>• Concern that in the absence of more detailed supporting plans and information the proposal does not provide a similar facility or equivalent community value</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Fire & Rescue Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition recommended in relation to fire hydrants within the development</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard advice</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributions requested</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council S106 contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please see attached table</li> <li>• OCC are not pursuing contributions towards central library, museum resource centre due to pooling restrictions</li> </ul>
Conservation Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is unfortunate that this scheme proposes the demolition of the remaining public building on the site to date from the arrival of the railway in Didcot</li> <li>• However the building is not considered to be of such interest that the development scheme should be compromised in order for it to be retained</li> <li>• Much of its historic value as a historic building associated with the arrival of the railway has been diminished by numerous</li> </ul>

	<p>changes to its context and setting which is unlikely to improve if the building were retained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The loss of the Prince of Wales is outweighed by the public benefits and other planning gains that comprehensive development would bring.</li> <li>• Condition recommended in relation to recording the building prior to demolition.</li> <li>• The demolition of the existing buildings and closure of Lydalls Road is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area</li> <li>• The loss of connections to the east is unfortunate, however it will not erode the character of Didcot Old Conservation Area that made it worthy of designation.</li> <li>• Unlikely to be any impact on the setting of the Didcot Northbourne Conservation Area as a result of this scheme.</li> </ul>
Forestry Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two areas of the site have some significant trees with prominent landscape value – Horse Chestnut trees nr Station Flooring and some within the grounds of Lydalls Rd Nursery</li> <li>• Future landscape planting schemes should include larger long lived trees – including tree pit details</li> <li>• All landscaping plans need to be designed with all other drainage and service routes – future applications should include this information.</li> </ul>
Landscape Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments provided in relation to details needed for the reserved matters / detailed application stage</li> <li>• Suggest details of the boundary wall along nursery site are looked at detailed stage</li> <li>• Detailed considerations in relation to public open space, end of Lydalls Road for further applications</li> </ul>
Urban Design Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed SOHA offices could be moved further north to the front of the road</li> <li>• The Station Rd / Cow Lane area is a key node and could be an area to create a great public open space</li> <li>• Wind impact assessment would be useful due to the heights of the proposed buildings</li> <li>• Concerns about the location of the nursery site in terms of its diminutive scale in such a prominent position and its relationship to Lydalls Road.</li> <li>• The nursery's relationship to the taller buildings will be a stark contrast</li> <li>• Agree there should be a landmark building along Station Road – 8 storey will achieve this but care should be taken about the massing of the building – suggest a transition from 3 storeys straight up to 8 storeys – consider a step up to avoid a distinction between heights</li> </ul>
Equalities Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed comments re future applications re street furniture locations and details, lighting, toilet provision, signage</li> <li>• Detailed comments provided re hotel and gym, residential. Decked car park – relevant to future detailed applications.</li> </ul>
Network Rail	<p>Object</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deck car park will sit on critical track access points for the road rail vehicles and encroaches on regulated station facilities</li> <li>• The building line is too close to the boundary as Network Rail</li> </ul>

	will be electrifying this section of line and the building will need to be moved further back than proposed
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Following a number of comments made in relation to the original plans, the following additional information was submitted:

- Air quality report
- Arboricultural report
- Proposed car park drawings
- Revised Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Bat survey
- Revised masterplan  
Addendum Transport Assessment

A financial appraisal was also submitted.

Below is a summary of the consultation responses received in relation to the amended plans. A full copy of these comments can be found on the council's website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk).

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Didcot Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No strong views subject to conditions:</li> <li>• Ensuring the scheme recognises links to the history and heritage of the town</li> <li>• Ensuring assistance by way of a parking scheme to those residents affected by the loss of parking</li> <li>• the provision of a named officer to work with residents during the construction phase</li> <li>• arrangements made to prevent damage to existing local housing</li> </ul>
Neighbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 letters of objection</li> <li>• Amended information does not address concerns</li> <li>• Concern about height of some of the buildings</li> <li>• Will cause a strain on the roads in the area</li> <li>• Concern about traffic and parking impact on local roads</li> <li>• Needs to be considered alongside other development happening in Didcot</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCC supports SODC in the redevelopment of this land</li> <li>• This development has a real opportunity to introduce a high quality mixed use development that can be seen as a Gateway to the centre of Didcot</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council – Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed original transport objection</li> <li>• Conditions recommended and S106 provisions</li> <li>• Further information will be required at reserved matters stage</li> <li>• The site is well located to maximise proximity to the rail station for bus and rail trips</li> <li>• Proposals to improve the public realm and urban environment to more pedestrian/ cycle friendly are welcomed</li> <li>• In keeping with OCC proposal to reduce traffic along Station Road and improve the urban environment</li> <li>• Clarification required in relation to bollards at the intersection of Station Road.</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council – Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objection – detailed specification of drawing of new nursery, conditions and S106 requirements to address points below</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCC is the landowner of the nursery site.</li> <li>• Further discussions are required and information in relation to Lydalls Nursery with regard to securing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An alternative site to be proposed by developer and subject to agreement with OCC to be secured prior to any development commencing;</li> <li>2. Scheme for re-provision of the nursery to be proposed by developer and subject to agreement with OCC to be secured prior to any development commencing;</li> <li>3. Timetable for re-provision of nursery to be proposed by developer for agreement with OCC prior to any development commencing and thereafter implemented in accordance with agreed details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditions and S106 requirements recommended</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council – Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S106 request towards education provision</li> </ul>
Countryside Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No further comments, additional information acceptable</li> </ul>
Environmental Health Officer – Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No objection to the principle of the application</li> <li>• Condition recommended</li> </ul>
Environmental Health Officer – Contaminated Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No objection</li> <li>• Condition recommended</li> </ul>
Environment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No objection</li> <li>• Conditions recommended</li> </ul>

#### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

##### 4.1 [P15/S0537/FUL](#) – Allowed at Appeal 2015

Removal of condition 1 of planning permission P14/S1886/FUL, which restricts the use of the premises to 3 years.

Change of use to Vehicle Hire, alterations to frontage, erection of wash-bay and new fences, together with Consent to display advertisements

[P14/S3457/FUL](#) - Approved (24/04/2015)

Extension of change of use of land for car parking for a temporary period of 2 years.

[P14/S1886/FUL](#) - Approved (18/08/2014)

Change of use to Vehicle Hire, alterations to frontage, erection of wash-bay and new fences, together with Consent to display advertisements

[P14/S0355/FUL](#) - Approved (02/04/2014)

Change of use from existing newsagent/off-license to Vehicle Hire with alterations to frontage, erection of enclosed wash-bay and new fences (as amended by drawings accompanying e-mail from agent received 17 March 2014).

[P12/S0528](#) - Other Outcome (22/07/2013)

Redevelopment of site comprising the erection of 72 apartments (of which 29 affordable homes), car parking, cycle parking, amenity areas, landscaping and access

[P12/S0553](#) - Approved (01/08/2012)

Demolition of existing office block and erection of 14 apartments in 4 storey residential block with associated car parking.

[P11/S0027/EX](#) - Approved (15/06/2012)

Extension of time for implementation of planning permission P08/W0985 (Demolition of existing office block and erection of 14 apartments in 4 storey residential block with associated car parking) (as amplified by site plan Sk-10A. accompanying email from



Agent dated 17 May 2012).

[P08/W0985](#) - Approved (15/07/2009)

Demolition of existing office block and erection of 14 apartments in 4 storey residential block with associated car parking.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy policies

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Title</b>
CS1	Presumption in favour of development
CSS1	The overall strategy
CSM1	Transport
CSM2	Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
CSEM1	Supporting a successful economy
CSH2	Density
CSH3	Affordable Housing
CST1	Town centres and shopping
CSDID1	The central area of Didcot
CSEN1	Landscape
CSQ3	Design
CSQ4	Design briefs for greenfield neighbourhoods and major developed sites
CSI1	Infrastructure provision

South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Title</b>
G5	Making the best use of land
C4	The landscape setting of settlements
C8	Species protection
C9	Landscape features
CON7	Conservation areas
CON12	Archaeology
EP1	Prevention of polluting emissions
EP2	Noise and vibrations
EP4	Protection of water resources
EP6	Surface water protection
EP8	Contaminated land
D1	Good design and local distinctiveness
D2	Vehicle and bicycle parking
D3	Plot coverage and garden areas
D4	Privacy and daylight
D5	Promoting mixed-use development
D6	Design against crime
D7	Access for all
D12	Public art
H4	Housing
T1	Transport requirements for new developments
T2	Transport
T8	Car parks and on-street parking

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Guidance

Didcot Town Centre SPD

**6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

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

1. Principle of the development
2. Viability
3. Affordable housing
4. Employment and economy (including loss of existing businesses)
5. Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area
6. Impact on neighbours
7. Demolition of existing buildings and loss of community facilities
8. Design (including crime prevention)
9. Landscape impact and trees
10. Highways – traffic / parking / highway safety and convenience
11. Ecology
12. Contaminated land
13. Environmental Protection
14. Air quality
15. Drainage and flooding
16. Equality
17. Noise and vibration
18. Heads of Terms

**6.2 Principle of the development**

In December, central Government announced that Didcot is to become a Garden Town, which will help with the delivery of 15,000 houses and 20,000 high-tech jobs. It also opens up funding for major infrastructure improvements including the northern perimeter road and the Science Bridge over the railway into Milton Park and improvements to existing areas of Didcot.

6.3 Didcot is the district's largest town and has been the focus of new growth for both housing and jobs for a number of years. However the historic piecemeal way in which development has occurred has created a number of challenges for the town, which are outlined in the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) in paragraphs 9.1 – 9.6 and these include a lack of connectivity between areas of the town especially residential areas and a lack of a historic core to the town centre compared to the district's other market towns.

6.4 Policy CSDID1 aims to secure improvements to the central areas of the town and identifies the site which is the subject of this application as an area for regeneration. Given the site's location opposite the train station and bus interchange, it is a key arrival point for the town and a highly sustainable location.

6.5 The planning application is submitted by SODC, exercising its civic leadership role to redevelop a key strategic site which, in its current form, is detracting from the image of the town and creates a poor entrance especially when arriving by train. The planning statement submitted in support of this application states that this comprehensive redevelopment of the area opposite Didcot Parkway Station will create an attractive entrance that welcomes arrivals to the town and provides public realm that integrates seamlessly with the station, town centre and wider area. It also identifies the following benefits.

- Deliver an iconic and high quality gateway to Didcot
- Improve accessibility of the town centre and complement the station as an access point for Didcot as a destination

- Reduce congestion around the town
  - Increase accessibility to employment opportunities to local residents
  - Encourage people to re-locate to Didcot
  - Deliver urban realm improvements and the linkages between Didcot Station and the town centre
  - Deliver iconic buildings for Didcot
  - Increase the attractiveness of travelling by public transport over private cars
  - Encourage walking and cycling
  - Provide an improved pedestrian link between the station and the town centre
  - Widening the choice of high quality homes through the creation of new apartments
- 6.6 In July 2015 Planning Committee resolved to approve the planning application for the extension of the Orchard Centre, which will include approximately 10,000 sq.m of new retail floorspace and a number of new cafes and restaurants. This development is strategically important for the town and to support the new housing development.
- 6.7 The proposal for the redevelopment of this site, subject of this planning application is also strategically important and will provide an improved pedestrian link from the station to the town centre.
- 6.8 The development plan for South Oxfordshire does not specifically allocate this site for redevelopment. However as the NPPF advised that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies out of date planning the is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.
- 6.9 The supporting planning statement and associated information makes the case that this proposal is sustainable development. From an economic perspective the site will create a mixed use development of housing, retail, office and education and will be an important physical link which will draw people from the train station through the site to the town centre. Currently this link is poor and with the extension of the Orchard Centre this proposal coordinates well with other strategic developments within the town.
- 6.10 From a social perspective the proposal redevelops a currently underused and unattractive site. The proposal will include up to 300 new dwellings the majority of which will be apartments. Whilst Didcot has been the focus of housing development for a number of years, the majority of the development has been houses as opposed to apartments. This proposal will add to the choice of housing in the town which will contribute towards supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing a supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations. The aim of the design of this scheme is to introduce a step change to the built environment within the town through a high quality scheme. Although the application is in outline with an illustrative masterplan, the parameter plans show the height and scale of development.
- 6.11 In terms of housing policy and delivery across the district, Didcot is ring fenced and currently does not have a five year supply of housing as required by para 49 of the NPPF. The NPPF states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. 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. Therefore for all of these reasons the principle of the development is considered acceptable.

- 6.12 From an environmental perspective the supporting technical documents accompanying this application consider the impact on the natural and built environment. This is covered in further detail in the following sections of this report.
- 6.13 **Viability**  
The Core Strategy policy CS11 requires new development to be served and supported by appropriate on and off site infrastructure and services. Planning permission will only be granted when infrastructure and services to meet the needs of the new development, including that set out in the infrastructure delivery plan and/or mitigate the impact of the new development to an agreed timescale.
- 6.14 The NPPF (para 173) states that pursuing sustainable development requires careful attention to viability and costs in plan-making and decision taking. Plans should be deliverable. To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns and ensure the development is deliverable.
- 6.15 The council commissioned BNP Parabis Real Estate (BNP) to produce a viability assessment. BNP used Argus Developer (“Argus”) to appraise the development proposals. Argus is a commercially available development appraisal package in widespread use throughout the industry. It has been accepted by a number of local planning authorities for the purpose of viability assessments and has also been accepted at planning appeals. Banks also consider Argus to be a reliable tool for secured lending valuation.
- Argus is essentially a cash-flow model. Such models all work on a similar basis:
- Firstly, the value of the completed development is assessed.
  - Secondly, the development costs are calculated, including either the profit margin required or land costs.
- 6.16 The land assembly costs of this proposal are high. The supporting statement submitted with this application explains one of the key aims of this proposal is to redevelop the site and create an iconic gateway feature for the town. As a result the viability assessment produced by BNP shows that the scheme is unable to pay the S106 contributions requested by Oxfordshire County Council and normally required by the District Council.
- 6.17 The Heads of Terms for the draft S106 agreement are set out in paragraph 6.53.
- 6.18 Although Policy CS11 requires development to mitigate its impact, in this case the development would be at a significant deficit if the full S106 package was required. Therefore in balancing the desire to bring forward re-development on this site against the requirements of Policy CS11, it is considered acceptable to waive these in this particular circumstance and have an overage clause instead. This clause will enable a proportionate level of profit to be taken at a later date towards S106 contributions if the scheme generates profit.
- 6.19 **Affordable housing**  
Policy CSH3 of the SOCS requires 40% affordable housing on all sites where there is a net gain of three or more dwellings subject to the viability provision of each site. A tenure mix of 75% social rented and 25% intermediate housing will be sought.

- 6.20 The viability report produced by BNP also considers affordable housing provision. The report demonstrates that affordable housing on this site is not viable and whilst the proposal is in deficit, the inclusion of affordable housing would make this greater.
- 6.21 The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that local authorities should ensure that the combined total impact of such requests does not threaten the viability of the sites and scale of development identified in the development plan. BNP's base appraisal assumes present day values and costs, so reflects the viability of the development if it were built out and sold in current market conditions. On this basis, the residual land value generated by the development incorporating the affordable housing will increase the deficit.
- 6.22 Whilst it is very unusual for a scheme to be considered acceptable with no affordable housing, the aims of this proposal to redevelop the area and the wider strategic benefits this will have has been given significant weight. Taking into account the viability issues and the economic and environmental benefits this redevelopment will bring, this scheme is considered acceptable without any affordable housing.
- 6.23 **Employment & Economy**  
As a result of the redevelopment of this site several existing businesses will be affected. However the proposal is for a mixed used scheme including, residential, retails, offices and education. A number of these proposed uses on the site will create new jobs both during the construction and operational phase of the development. The redevelopment of this site is also considered to support the economy of the town centre and will encourage people visiting the town to spend money within it.
- 6.24 **Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas**  
CON7 of the adopted SOLP requires any development outside of a conservation area to have regard to the character and appearance of any nearby designated area. The sites does not include any statutory listed buildings or lie within any Conservation Areas but does form part of the more immediate setting to Didcot Station Road Conservation Area and Didcot Old Conservation Area.
- 6.25 The Conservation Officer notes that the Prince of Wales Public House is one of the remaining public buildings on the site to date from the arrival of the railway in Didcot. Some nearby residents have raised concerns about the physical loss of this building and the loss of the facility. The owner of the premises also objects to its demolition as do (Campaign for Real Ale) CAMRA. However it is not considered of sufficient merit to warrant statutory designation as a building of national importance. In addition the Conservation Officer does not consider the building to be of such interest that the development scheme should be compromised in order for it to be retained. Much of its value as a historic building associated with the arrival of the railway has been diminished by numerous changes to its context and setting and this would change again if the building were retained.
- 6.26 The loss of the Prince of Wales is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits and other planning gains that comprehensive redevelopment would bring as paragraph 135 of the NPPF states.

The Conservation Officer considers that the demolition of the existing buildings and closure of Lydalls Road is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the designated Conservation Area. The building heights plan suggests that the scale of buildings closest to the Conservation Area will be largely in-keeping with the existing. The removal of the Prince of Wales public house will result in a further diminishment of the relationship of the Station Road House with the 19<sup>th</sup> Century development of Didcot however this is not considered to be harmful.

- 6.27 The Conservation Officer has not raised any objection to the closure of Lydalls Road. Whilst it is unfortunate as it marks the termination of a historical route it will not erode the characteristics of Didcot Old Conservation Area that made it worthy of designation.
- 6.28 There is unlikely to be any impact on the setting of Didcot Northbourne Conservation Area as a result of this scheme. Therefore the Conservation Officer has not raised any objection to this development but has recommended a Level 3 building record to be sent to the Local Historic Environment Record in respect of the Prince of Wales Public House.
- 6.29 **Impact on neighbours**  
29 letters of objection and 3 letters of support were received in relation to the original plans and 10 letters of objection were received in relation to the amended plans and additional information. In relation to the support for this proposal some nearby residents welcome the site being improved from a 'tatty wasteland' to a mixed use scheme. However a number of objectors have concerns about the height of some of the buildings proposed and consider these to be an eye sore and the density of the development. A number of nearby residents who live adjacent to the also have strong concerns about parking and traffic in the area which they say is already an issue and will be made worse by both the construction of this development and once completed, with concerns that more on-street parking outside their houses is likely to occur. Parking and highway safety and convenience is considered in further detail in the following sections of this report. Local residents are also concerned about the loss of the pub as a facility, which is considered in further details in the following sections of this report. This development will result in a significant change to the built form in this part of the town. The supporting planning statement submitted with this application states that the purpose of this redevelopment is to improve the area especially when arriving by train and to deliver a high quality, iconic development.
- 6.30 Several neighbours raised specific concerns about the impact of the development on their amenity. As well as visiting the general area I also visited 44A Haydon Road and 23 Lydalls Road to assess the impact from their property. The owners of 23 Lydalls Road are concerned about the impact of the development not only on their amenity but the structural integrity of their property. Recent development at the Station Forecourt caused concerns in relation to noise, vibration and structural impact. The owners of 44A Haydon Road have concerns about the impact of light on their property and the street.
- 6.31 44A Haydon Road and the other properties along this road currently look out onto a surface level car park. This will change as a result of the proposal with a significant increase in the amount of built development opposite them and an increase in height. The height parameter plans submitted as part of this application show that there will be 3 storey development along the majority of the northern end of Haydon Road. This will change the view from the properties along this part of the road. A Design and Access Statement was submitted with the application which included a daylight and sunlight assessment. This assessment illustrates the path of cast shadows through the day for the summer and winter solstice and for the spring and summer equinox. These illustrations show that whilst there will be some shadowing, most of this during the winter months will have passed by mid-morning. Therefore although there will be some shadowing and therefore reduction in light to some properties along Haydon Road it will pass by mid-morning and is not considered to be at a level that would be detrimental to their amenity.
- 6.32 Opposite number 23 Lydalls Road are SOHA offices which are a two storey building. The proposal is an outline application therefore the specific details of any buildings

opposite number 23 and the other neighbouring properties is not yet fixed. However the illustrative masterplan height parameter plan shows a two storey building (the relocated nursery) opposite, and to the west a three storey building. Therefore in terms of changes in the type and style of building opposite, this would not result in this development being detrimental to the amenity of nearby neighbours in accordance with Policy D4 and D1 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy.

**6.33 Demolition of existing buildings and loss of community facilities**

The site mostly consists of car parking, although there is an office, pub, nursery school and car rental shop which are still operating from this site. There were also some commercial premises which have now closed and a former Labour club, also closed and vacant. Policies CF1 and CF2 of the adopted Local Plan relate to the safeguarding of community facilities and services including recreational facilities. Proposals that result in the loss of a recreational facility or an essential community facility or service through re-development will not be permitted unless suitable alternative provision is made for the facility on a site or elsewhere in the locality or in the case of recreational facilities, it is not needed or in the case of commercial services it is not economically viable. Additional community facilities and services will be permitted providing there are no traffic, amenity or environmental objections.

**6.34 Prince of Wales Pub**

A number of neighbour objections to this proposal relates to the loss of the existing pub on the site. Whilst the design of the illustrative Masterplan is not able to incorporate the current building on the site, the proposal does include a public house (A4 Use Class), along with other commercial facilities including A1, A2, A3 and A4 and a gym. The proposal includes the relocation of the existing SOHA offices and the nursery school on the site. Therefore these services and facilities are not lost but re-provided elsewhere.

6.35 Therefore in relation to the existing pub, the focus becomes not the loss of the facility as the proposal includes the provision of a D4 use, but the actual loss of the building. The Conservation Officer has assessed this building and does not consider it worthy of statutory protection. In addition the Conservation Officer does not consider the building to be of such interest that the development scheme should be compromised in order for it to be retained. Much of its value as a historic building associated with the arrival of the railway has been diminished by numerous changes to its context and setting which is unlikely to improve if the building were retained.

**6.36 Lydall's Nursery School**

In Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) response to the amended plans, they consider that the nursery provision on this site is a community facility that should be safeguarded against loss as set out in Policy CF1 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and paragraph 70 of the NPPF. OCC objected to the original and amended plans. However in relation to the amended plans they have set out specifications which if incorporated into conditions and the S106 agreement would address the concerns. OCC have explained that this nursery provides for children with particular special educational needs. They expect referrals to the nursery to increase in the coming years. In addition it is a training facility with future potential to become a partner to a teaching school. OCC have specific requirements in terms of the building and outdoor space. Currently the illustrative Masterplan shows a two-storey building which would not be acceptable, in addition there are concerns about the amount of outdoor play space. As this proposal is in outline there are no detailed drawings in relation to any of the buildings, therefore the Masterplan is only an indicative indication of the nursery provision. Therefore OCC have set out the key site dimensions and building specification which is required to meet the educational requirements. These will be secured by condition and a S106 legal agreement.

**6.37 Design**

High quality design is an aim of policies CSQ3 and CSQ4 of the SOCS and policies D1 – D7, D10 and D12 of the SOLP. The NPPF paras 56 – 68 also sets out the importance of design in the built environment. The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

6.38 The Urban Design Officer considers this site presents an excellent opportunity for a comprehensive redevelopment that will be an asset to the town and help define and improve the sense of arrival to it. The site is in a highly sustainable location and in its current state is underused and therefore has significant potential for positive redevelopment. As this is an outline application further detailed matters in relation to the character and appearance of the development, materials and landscaping will be discussed and addressed at reserved matters.

6.39 Para 61 of the NPPF states that the visual appearance of architecture of buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations therefore planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, historic and built environment. The supporting planning statement and the Design and Access Statement submitted as part of this application explains the wider strategic importance of this site in terms of the built environment and that the aim of this development is to create a sense of arrival into the town and create a connection to the Orchard Centre, thereby creating a legible and well connected town between the train station, this site and the town centre. These are currently poorly connected and not legible especially when arriving by train.

**6.40 Landscape Impact**

One of the aims of this proposal is to create a step change in terms of the character of the area and create an iconic development. The supporting Design and Access Statement explains that this has been achieved through taller buildings on the site in comparison to the surrounding area.

6.41 Given the increase in height a landscape and visual impact assessment accompanied the application. The Landscape Officer reviewed the original assessment and requested additional view points from the adjacent streets Haydon Road and Lydalls Road were included. These additional viewpoints were submitted as part of the amended plans. The Urban Design Officer having regard to the Landscape Officers comments considers that this site, given its location, is a sustainable site and identifies it as being appropriate for higher scale and denser development. Therefore whilst the character of the area will change as a result of taller buildings on the site it is not considered that this will have wider harmful impacts on the landscape.

6.42 The Forestry Officer has not raised any objection to the proposed development. It will require the removal of two main areas of tree cover across the site, trees at the rear of the existing flooring business growing on rail-track land east of the station and the trees adjacent to Lydalls Road. However due to the strategic nature of the project, if a future site layout design could be produced to accommodate a considerable amount of new planting, then the harm caused can be offset and mitigated for. The current site layout proposal offers some limited opportunity for planting but it could be significantly improved. Considering the proposed scale of some of the new buildings green space and tree planting will be essential to soften the development and enhance the character of the area.

6.43 The Forestry Officer has recommended a landscaping condition should be attached if permission is to be granted and that future reserved matters applications should include



full landscaping proposals including larger long lived trees and a wide variety of species to insure a diverse and robust tree scape. For any new tree planting within hard surface areas tree pit designs must be able to provide the trees with access to suitable volumes of soil that is in an oxygenated, hydrated and un-compacted form.

**6.44 Highways – safety, convenience, access and parking**

A number of neighbour comments have raised concerns about parking on the nearby local roads, traffic congestion, parking provision for the development and construction traffic. OCC objected to the original proposal as there was a lack of information within the original Transport Assessment (TA) and they had some concerns about some highway related details on the Masterplan. As part of the amended plans an addendum Transport Assessment was submitted. OCC Highways have withdrawn their objection to the proposal and recommended a number of conditions which are incorporated in section 8.1 of this report.

The site is well located to maximise proximity to the rail station for bus and rail trips, it is also well located to the main town. Therefore it is regarded as a highly sustainable location. OCC have welcomed the proposals to improve the public realm and urban environment to be more pedestrian and cycle friendly. The proposal is also in keeping with OCC plans to reduce traffic along Station Road and to improve the urban environment.

The addendum TA has regard to other development that are underway or existing near to the site, traffic flows generated from this proposed development have had regard to cumulative impacts. A number of neighbours have raised concerns about this point, however it has been address though the TA and OCC Highways have not raised any objection. In relation to construction traffic a condition is recommended at section 8.1 of this report requiring these details before development commences.

In relation to parking concerns, the existing parking on the site will be replaced by the new train station multi-storey which have permitted development consent to be built off Foxhall Road. Therefore the parking lost on this site will be provided elsewhere. In addition a multi-storey car park is proposed on the site next to the train station. The design of this car park had to be amended to address Network Rails concerns about the proximity of the building to their land. As a result the design of the multi-storey has changed and will now include 10 levels which is approximately 5 storeys high with a total of 272 spaces.

As this application is at outline stage, the reserved matters application will detail parking provision further. For these reasons it is not considered that there is a parking, highway safety and convenience objection to this proposal.

**6.45 Ecology**

The Countryside Officer has advised that there are no known significant ecological constraints on the site. Natural England have not raised any objection to this proposal either. The habitats are generally urban in nature and lack any nature conservation interest, surveys conducted in support of this application have confirmed this. Surveys of the site for protected species have confirmed that the site is of low sustainability for most species and the only potential constraint is the possible presence of roosting bats within the existing structures.

6.46 Additional surveys were conducted over summer 2015 have not revealed the presence of any roosting bats within the buildings which would be lost as a result of these proposals. As a result the Countryside Officer has concluded that there are no specific mitigation requirements or other recommendations.

**6.47 Contaminated land**

A preliminary risk assessment was accompanied the planning application. This report identified potential sources of contamination and makes recommendations for further intrusive investigations. Therefore the Environmental Health Officer recommends that if

planning permission is granted a condition requiring further investigations is included.

**6.48 Air quality**

The Environmental Health Officer raised concerns in relation to the air quality information originally submitted. Following the submission of additional information they do not have any objections to the principle of the application and recommend a pre-commencement condition requiring the applicant to agree measures to mitigate the impact on air quality in the areas identified. These proposed measures should have regard to the council's 'developer's guidance' which details minimum best practice standards and additional mitigation measures for air quality.

**6.49 Drainage and Flooding**

In relation to flooding the Environment Agency has not raised any objection to this proposal subject to their recommended conditions.

**6.50 Equality**

The Council's Equalities Officer was consulted in relation to this application. Detailed comments were received which need to be incorporated into the reserved matters application.

**6.51 Noise and Vibration**

Some nearby neighbours have raised concerns about noise and vibration especially during construction of this scheme. The NPPF states in summary through a series of policies that planning decisions should aim to

- avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life
- mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development, including through the use of conditions
- recognise that development will often create some noise and existing businesses wanting to develop in continuance of their business should not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in nearby land use since they were established
- identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

6.52 In terms of noise and vibration control on construction and open sites there is BS 5228-1: 2009 + A1: 2014. This is a British Standard in construction which developers have to have regard to when constructing sites. Therefore there are separate requirements outside planning legislation which any developer on this site will have to follow.

**6.53 S106 Planning Obligation Heads of Terms**

Section 8 below outlines the recommended conditions. A S106 agreement will also be required. The Heads of Terms are:

- Overage clause if any profit is generated from the development
- Contributions to highway works
- Nursery relocation including specification requirements of new nursery

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

7.1 This application proposes a significant change in terms of the density and style of development in this part of Didcot. The aim is to comprehensively redevelop the area opposite Didcot Parkway Station to create an attractive entrance that welcomes arrivals

to the town and provides public realm that integrates seamlessly with the station, town centre and wider area. For nearby residents of the site, their view and outlook from their properties will change, however the development is not considered to have a detrimental impact on their amenity.

7.2 The original Highway objection has been addressed through an addendum Transport Assessment, this has considered parking, traffic generation and cumulative traffic impacts in the wider area. The objection in relation to the re-provision of Lydall's nursery can be addressed through conditions and a S106 legal agreement.

7.3 In line with the NPPF this application proposes a sustainable development. It is contributing towards the local economy through the creation of jobs. It is creating a high quality built environment in the town expanding the choice of housing for residents in the town and the wider area. The development also has regard to its environmental impact and through the conditions recommended in section 8 below which will ensure natural resources are not harmed.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

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

- i. The prior completion of S106 agreement to cover the following:**
  - Overage clause if any profit is generated from the development.**
  - Contributions to highway works.**
  - Nursery relocation including specification requirements of new nursery.**
- ii. Detailed conditions in accordance with the summary set out below:**
  - 1. Submission of reserved matters application.**
  - 2. Approved plans**
  - 3. Framework details and phased schedule prior to Reserved Matters application.**
  - 4. Historic buildings recording – Prince of Wales Public House.**
  - 5. Inclusive mobility guidance to be submitted with any reserved matters application.**
  - 6. Landscape scheme.**
  - 7. Contaminated land report.**
  - 8. Construction management plan.**
  - 9. Construction environmental plan.**
  - 10. Air quality mitigation.**
  - 11. Noise and vibration management plan (construction).**
  - 12. Dust management plan (construction).**
  - 13. Bus shelter provision.**
  - 14. Access details.**
  - 15. Carriageway works.**
  - 16. Sustainable urban drainage scheme details.**
  - 17. Foul water drainage details.**
  - 18. Construction phasing details.**
  - 19. Construction method statement.**
  - 20. Waste material disposing details.**
  - 21. Security hoarding details and installation.**
  - 22. Construction routing agreement.**
  - 23. Travel plans.**
  - 24. Re-provision of nursery.**
  - 25. Fire hydrant details.**
  - 26. Bollard details and installation at intersection with Station Road.**

8.2 **The following is a list of recommended informatives which draw the applicant's attention to other requirements outside of planning legislation which they should have regard to. They are not included as conditions as they repeat other legislation and requirements:**

- 1. Noise and Vibration - BS 5228-1: 2009 + A1: 2014.**
- 2. Section 219 – 225 of the Highways Act / Private Road Agreement.**
- 3. Works on public highway - Section 184 of Highways Act 1980.**

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