

APPLICATION NO.	P15/S3228/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	30.9.2015
PARISH	EAST HAGBOURNE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Jane Murphy Pat Dawe
APPLICANT	Grainger PLC
SITE	Land east of New Road East Hagbourne
PROPOSAL	Outline application for the construction of circa 170 residential dwellings with associated vehicular access from New Road, internal access roads, public open space, landscaping and parking (detailed access with all other matters reserved). (As amended by agent letter dated 15 January 2016 and accompanying drawings and additional information, and additional highway information dated 16 March 2016)
OFFICER	Cathie Scotting

INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 A site location plan is **attached** as Appendix A. This outline application is for circa 170 dwellings on a greenfield site on land within the parish of East Hagbourne and adjoining the parish boundary of Didcot. The site is not allocated in the Development Plan and does not represent an infill site under the definitions of the Core Strategy. With regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, the council does not have a 5 year housing supply in Didcot and recent appeal decisions have determined that the Rest of the District also does not have a 5 year supply of housing. Accordingly the council should grant permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. The council needs to consider and balance the benefits and adverse impacts of this proposal in the policy context and this is set out in sections below.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The site is situated on the east side of New Road which runs south from the Jubilee Way roundabout in Didcot to the village of East Hagbourne. Access is taken from New Road which forms the western boundary of the site. This frontage is tree lined with a mixture of specimens. The site is bounded by a public footpath and mature trees to the north beyond which lie allotments and the housing development of Fleet Meadow, built in the 1980's. The eastern and southern boundaries adjoin agricultural land. The south west corner of the site adjoins a single storey residential property.
- 2.2 The development proposes 170 dwellings incorporating 40% affordable housing with a policy compliant tenure mix. The site area is 7.05 ha including 4.95 ha of residential land, 1.5 ha of open space comprising 1.16ha amenity space and 0.37ha planting. Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) accommodate 0.37 ha and the residual area is the access. The layout is indicative yet it is envisaged that the development

would comprise houses of up to 2.5 storeys and be built at a density of approximately 34 dph. The parameter plans shows the movement strategy and the areas of built development and open space (**attached** Appendices B and C). The illustrative layout provides an indication of how the development might be laid out (Appendix D **attached**).

- 2.3 The proposed highway works include a main access road, roughly centre point in the frontage and an emergency access south of the main access. Also included is an extended footway on the site frontage plus a zebra crossing to the north of the site access and an informal crossing point just south of the main access. New bus stops on New Road on the north and south carriageways are also proposed. These proposals can be seen on drawing 1/13 Rev D **attached** as Appendix E.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

A summary of representations is provided below. All of the representations and submitted documents received by stakeholders and interested parties can be viewed on the website:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P15/S3228/O>

3.1 **East Hagbourne PC – Object**

- The site is a strategic gap separating Didcot and East Hagbourne
- The site is in East Hagbourne, not Didcot
- The proposal would open the door for completely unplanned development
- The proposal fundamentally contravenes the Local Plan
- The proposal is unsustainable
- The proposal adds nothing to the community of East Hagbourne
- The public is overwhelmingly opposed to this development

Other environmental concerns including traffic, loss of agricultural land, light pollution, historic village of East Hagbourne

3.2 Bluestone Planning on behalf of the Parish Council have also raised the following issues:

- Housing land supply
- Previous decisions regarding allocation of this site for development
- Landscape impacts
- Coalescence and 2008 Greenspace Study
- Density
- Cumulative impacts
- Agricultural land quality
- Urban design issues
- Sewerage
- Accessibility

3.3 Also on behalf of the Parish Council, Thirwell Associates have reviewed the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment advising they have concerns over the methodology and accordingly the conclusions.

3.4 **Didcot Town Council - Object**

- Conflicts with NPPF para 17 – not Plan led, and para 75 planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access.
- Conflicts with SODC Core Strategy to support character and distinctiveness of

- villages. Development would result in coalescence of East Hagbourne with Didcot.
- Conflict with CS1 and CSR1. Enough housing already proposed for Didcot. Not an infill site
- No contribution offered for green infrastructure contrary to CSDID4 or open space, playing fields, pitches
- Didcot's road network is at capacity at peak hours. Without major road improvements and maintenance of existing bus services the proposal is unsustainable.

3.5

Neighbours

Over 600 written comments objecting to the development have been received from neighbours, including 4 comments supporting more housing. These comments include all the objections that were sent in relation to the application for an EIA Screening Opinion (P15/S2541/SCR) and some are in duplicate. Below is a list of the types of objections.

- Conflict with Core Strategy and NPPF, breaches of planning policy
-
- Transport and road infrastructure proposals
- Hazard to pedestrians
- Land and landscape
- Loss of open space
- Effect on right of way
- Settlement character - coalescence with Didcot
- Flood risk
- Loss of character
- Loss of privacy and amenity
- Design / Density
- Pressure on schools, local services, lack of infrastructure
- Unsustainable development
- Drainage
- Light pollution
- Biodiversity
- Loss of good grade agricultural land
- Provides no social, economic or environmental benefits

3.6

Mind the Green Gap (Residents Group)

Mind the Green Group have made over 25 representations and have also sent over 20 letters requesting information about the planning system and policy considerations in respect of this scheme. MtGG have also produced a Planning Statement and sought advice from a landscape architect. Key points in their representations are:

- The site is East Hagbourne and is not part of Didcot housing area (for the purposes of supply)
- Development should be plan led and the site is not allocated
- Will set a precedent for further development
- Cumulative effects of this and other future development should be considered
- The site is unsustainable
- Loss of green gap, previous appeal decisions have supported the retention of the open gap despite pressures for housing
- Amended scheme does not provide more green space, just reconfigured
- Green space is inadequate for play and SUDs
- Didcot Garden Town – need to think strategically regarding highway works

- Highway impacts include air quality
- Environmental impacts
- Loss of agricultural land
- Proposed density

3.7 **Ed Vaizey MP**

Object: Conflict with SODC Local Plan and Core Strategy, closing green gap between E Hagbourne and Didcot. Application site is not a strategic site within SODC Local Plan.

3.8 **Oxfordshire County Council** No objection subject to conditions

OCC Transport:

Oct 2015: No objection subject to conditions but raised issues in respect of a single vehicular access arrangements, masterplan requiring resolution, safe routes to school including traffic island and mitigation of local impact.

Feb 2016: Oxfordshire County Council are broadly in support of housing development at this location yet object on grounds of:

- Substandard vehicular access arrangements
- Lack of crossing provision on New Road
- In-sufficient details in relation to emergency access
- Stage 1 Road Safety Audit not provided

April 2016: OCC broadly in support of housing at this location and no objection following further information on road safety, highway layout emergency access, a zebra controlled crossing and swept paths. Require conditions/ S106 agreement :-

Off-site highway works (S278)

Developer contribution to Jubilee roundabout c. (£167K total)

Bus stop and services (£133k total)

OCC Archaeology

No objection subject to conditions- programme of archaeological mitigation prior to development, conditions for approval of scheme of investigation and programme to produce an archive and publishable report.

OCC Education

No objection – Support subject to s106 contributions for primary and secondary education and a condition that planning permission is dependent on a satisfactory agreement to secure resources necessary to increase education provision.

3.9 **North Wessex AONB board**

Object: Although not within the AONB the development sits within the landscape which forms part of the setting of the AONB. The fields to the East of Didcot provide an open character, one which is relatively untouched by development. The site forms a platform for long distance views into the AONB which is a positive characteristic. The creep of development to the east and south east would unbalance the relationship with smaller villages and the setting of the AONB would be compromised as the urban edge would encroach into open countryside. A settlement's character in many cases depends critically on the presence of green land within or adjoining it. The proposed scheme would add an urban expansion to this rural locality, and be of detriment to the special qualities of the AONB which fails to reflect the character of the existing settlement. These open parcels of land are important green spaces which act as important green buffers; as a result these spaces are sensitive to change.

- 3.10 **CPRE (Rights of Way)**
Object: The sections of FP 24 to the east of the site and BR17 to the south of the site have fine open views towards Didcot, from which this development would markedly detract. Proposed planting on southern boundary inadequate, proposed improvements to FP 24 unnecessary and undesirable.
- 3.11 **Thames Water**
Current inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application. Should the Local Planning Authority look to approve the application, Thames Water recommend a 'Grampian Style' condition preventing works until the drainage strategy is agreed.
- 3.12 **Drainage (Monson)**
Agreements with Thames Water will be necessary in respect of foul connections. No objection subject to conditions.
- 3.13 **SODC Equality Officer**
No objection subject to conditions on accessibility re path boundaries, seating with backs and arms, street furniture and obstructions markings, accessible play equipment.
- 3.14 **SODC Urban Design Officer**
Original: Scheme has limited vehicular connectivity and legibility particularly in east of site. Positive edges and proposed pedestrian links welcomed. Car parking layout and amenity space needs attention at detailed stage.
Amended: The revised scheme has addressed majority of concerns. At detailed stage improvements on the road layout (in the east and north west) should be sought.
- 3.15 **SODC Forestry Officer:** No objection subject to conditions:
Original: Development layout needs revision due to swales impact on tree root protection areas on northern boundary. Proposals should increase tree cover in the area but need to ensure foundation depth sufficient to allow landscaping to develop as shrinkable subsoil in Didcot area could jeopardise this. Permitted development rights should be removed to avoid future risk to porches conservatories etc. Plant long lived trees, designing service runs (drainage, lighting etc.) to avoid conflict. Will need determination at reserved matters stage.
Amended: The proposed access on to New Rd shown on the amended plans will cause the loss of 4 trees in total, 3 for the main entrance and 1 for the emergency access. Further engineering works to the access (requested by OCC) would very likely result in further tree loss opening views into the site. Matters above need to be addressed at detailed stage.
- 3.16 **SODC Countryside Officer**
Original: The site is not covered by ecological designations and there are no records for protected species. The boundary hedgerows are the most valuable ecological species. Further detail on achieving no net loss / further gain of biodiversity required will be required at reserved matters stage. The Didcot Greenspace Network Feasibility Study identifies the lack of green infrastructure in Didcot. The submitted Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy submitted fails to address the policy requirements and increasing level of GI on site, particularly on southern edge or seek contributions for off-site provision should be sought.
Amended: The minor amendments to the illustrative plan and supporting documents do not alter previous comments. Either additional green infrastructure is required or contributions.
- 3.17 **SODC Landscape Architect**

Original: Largely agree with the findings of the LVIA and feel the development can be accommodated on the site. Main issues are:

- Coalescence between Didcot and East Hagbourne and need to retain a recognisable gap
- Development should sit comfortably with the surrounding countryside
- Not require heavily engineered highway works
- Existing significant landscape features should be sensitively incorporated into the development

Recommend a more meaningful and multi-functional green infrastructure link along the northern boundary so it builds on the gap already provided by the allotments and the public footpath leading out to the AONB. The space could perform a number of functions e.g. open space, amenity walking routes, wildlife corridor, protecting existing trees and new planting, SUDs features and retain some views along the walking route to the east. Seek amendments achieve above and also a softer, more perforated landscaped boundary to the south and east countryside boundaries and retain good frontage trees allowing for some removal of lesser specimens.

Amended: Through negotiation, improvements to the size, usability and variety of landscape features in the proposed linear open space along the northern side of the site, have been incorporated. The linear open space would now perform a number of green infrastructure functions (footpath links to AONB/informal play/SUDs features/habitat creation) and draw additional value from being adjacent and associated with the existing allotments and open space on the housing to the north. The highway authority has requested a right hand turn into the development. Having discussed the location for this is was clear that it would cause the majority of the front boundary trees to be removed and this would undoubtedly cause harm to the character of New Road. The short-medium term landscape impact of this loss on the character of New Road would be significant. This requirement has been dropped and the details shown on drawing Proposed Highway Layout 1/13 Rev D are acceptable.

- 3.18 **SODC Air Quality**
No objection subject to air mitigation measures
- 3.19 **SODC Contaminated Land**
No objection
- 3.20 **SODC Environmental Protection**
No objection subject to conditions re operational hours and dust control conditions for construction period.
- 3.21 **SODC Housing**
Affordable housing: Flats should have their own individual street entrances (avoid communal hallways). The majority of 2 bed units need to be houses for families. Seeks a recommended mix, tenure and unit sizes.
- 3.22 **SODC Sustainability Officer**
Further details suggested on work on resilience and adaptation to climate change, renewable energy.
- 3.23 **SODC Corporate Strategy (waste)**
No objection at this outline stage. Roads need to accommodate larger refuse vehicles
- 3.24 **Highways England – No objection**

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P15/S2541/SCR

EIA Screening Opinion – An Environmental Statement is not required

P81/W0261 - Refused (01/07/1981) - Refused on appeal (08/10/1981)

Construction of spine road and proposed new junction at Hagbourne Road

P80/W0467/RM - Refused (22/10/1980)- Refused on appeal (08/10/1981)

Siting of new residential spine road and proposed junction at Hagbourne Road.

This application included the current application site and land to the north of the public footpath (now housing).

P80/W0466/RM - Refused (22/10/1980) - Refused on appeal (08/10/1981)

Siting of new residential spine road and proposed junction at Hagbourne Road.

P76/W0049/O – Appeal part allowed (14/04/1980)

Site for housing, amenity space and access road. The site included the current application and land to the north – the Inspector allowed development north of the public footpath and refused permission for housing south of the public footpath (the current application site).

P72/R4896 - Refused (01/11/1972)

Residential development

P71/R4540 - Refused (02/09/1971)

Proposed residential development of land

P65/R3286 - Refused (05/11/1965)

Proposed residential development of land

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving sustainable development through economic, social and environmental roles.

Section 4: Sustainable transport

Section 6: Delivering high quality homes

Section 7: Design

Section 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural environment

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

5.3 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy policies

CS1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSS1 Overall strategy is to focus major new development at Didcot, provide new housing at Henley, Thame and Wallingford, support new housing allocations at the larger villages and allow limited amounts of housing at smaller and other villages, outside of towns and villages development should only serve specific needs of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment.

CSM1 Transport Major infrastructure at Didcot

CSM2 Transport assessments and travel plans

CSH1 Amount & distribution of housing

CSH2 Density: Minimum density of 25 dwellings/ha unless adverse impact on area
CSH3 Affordable housing: 40% affordable sought on all sites where net gain of more than 3 dwellings, subject to viability.

CSH4 Meeting housing needs: Dwelling mix to be sought on all developments to meet needs of current and future households.

CSR1 Housing in villages: housing will be allowed where the scale and nature of development accords with the settlement strategy. East Hagbourne is a smaller village. Where infill sites of up to 0.2 ha (4-6 houses) will be considered, protecting local character and distinctiveness.

CSB1 Biodiversity Seeks to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity and wherever possible a net gain can be achieved

CSDID4 Infrastructure to serve Didcot – Gateway developments

CSG1 Seeks a net gain in green infrastructure provision overall in the standards in the Didcot Greenspace Network Feasibility Study

CSQ3 Design: all proposals should be accompanied by a design and access statement to show how they have responded to criteria set out in policy

CSEN1 Landscape:

The district's distinct landscape character and key features will be protected against inappropriate development and where possible enhanced.

(i) Where development is acceptable in principle, measures will be sought to integrate it into the landscape character of the area.

(ii) High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and planning decisions will have regard to their setting. Proposals which support the economies and social wellbeing of the AONBs and their communities, including affordable housing schemes, will be encouraged provided they do not conflict with the aims of conservation and enhancement.

CSI1 Infrastructure

CSB1 Conservation and improvement of biodiversity: avoid net loss in biodiversity

Infrastructure provision: development must be served by appropriate on/off site infrastructure/services, permission only granted when provision and/or mitigation of the development impact has been put in place or will be provided as agreed

CSC1 Delivery and contingency: if sites not developed in accordance with timescales contingency measures will apply

5.4 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011- Saved Policies

G2 The district's countryside, settlements and environmental resources will be protected from adverse developments

G4 Protecting the countryside

C4 Landscape setting and Historic character and appearance of settlement

CON 12,13 and 14 Archaeology

EP1 Protection from polluting emissions

EP2 Noise

EP3 Lighting

EP6 Surface water

EP8 Contaminated Land

D1 Good design

D2 Vehicle and cycle parking

D7 Access
D10 Waste
H4 Housing
R2 Outdoor playing space
R3 Indoor sport
R6 Informal open space
R8 Public right of way

5.5 South Oxfordshire Design Guide

5.6 East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan

East Hagbourne is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The area of the plan includes the whole parish including the application site. A four week consultation on the suitability of the submitted neighbourhood plan area ran from Thursday 5 November to 3 December 2015.

5.7 EIA Regulations

As defined by the EIA regulations and guidance, the site is not within a sensitive area and nor will it have a significant urbanising effect (e.g. a new development of more than 1000 dwellings). The effects from this proposal are likely to be of local importance but not significant within the context of the EIA regulations and guidance. The LPA has determined that this proposal is not likely to give rise to significant environmental impacts and is therefore not EIA development and a full EIA statement is not required.

The EIA guidance states that local planning authorities (LPA) should always have regard to the possible cumulative effects arising from any existing or approved development. Whilst the LPA are aware that proposals are likely to come forward for further development in the vicinity they, currently, do not exist and are not approved. The LPA not able to consider tangibly the potential impacts of possible sites.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Principle of development - Policy considerations

- 6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. The development plan currently comprises the adopted Core Strategy 2012 and the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. The emerging Local Plan for South Oxfordshire 2032 is at an early stage and cannot be given any material weight. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF provides that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given). Other material planning considerations include national planning guidance within the NPPF and NPPG.
- 6.2 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF expects local planning authorities to "use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area".

Paragraph 49 of the NPPF states "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".

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date permission should be granted *unless* (my emphasis), "any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted".

Housing Supply

- 6.3 In respect of housing supply, and the disaggregated approach to Didcot / Rest of District that the Council has adopted, the Council accept that since 2013 there has been a persistent under delivery of housing against the 5 year supply of housing requirements for Didcot in the Core Strategy. In 2014 the Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SHMA) identified higher figures to meet need in Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire councils have begun to apply the updated figures in the emerging Local Plans (e.g. Cherwell, Vale of White Horse). South Oxfordshire will identify more land for housing in the emerging Local Plan 2032 however recent appeal decisions¹ have questioned the disaggregated approach and concluded that the council should be applying a higher housing target² which means delivering more housing than is currently planned for in the Core Strategy. However, the inspectors recognised the strength of our housing distribution strategy, which focuses development to the more sustainable towns and larger villages. Whilst it is accepted that Didcot does not have a 5 year supply of housing under the disaggregated approach, the outcome of these two appeal decisions means that the Core Strategy housing supply policies across the District are given less weight in our decision making. Sustainable development should now be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing. Applications for housing should now be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and should be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing.
- 6.4 In respect of Didcot's housing supply the council has recognised for some time that there is a need to address the housing supply shortfall in Didcot and this is reflected in the annual monitoring statements. The Council's Core Strategy Policy CSC1 'Delivery and Contingency' also applies wherein it states the council will identify alternative deliverable site(s) through a plan or other mechanism in general accordance with the distribution strategy of the Core Strategy. Despite this only a couple of significant windfall sites have come forward since 2013 - the brownfield site known as Didcot Gateway, incorporating up to 300 homes (P15/S2159/O) and Hadden Hill for 74 homes (P15/S4066).
- 6.5 The Core Strategy distribution and settlement hierarchy (CSS1) identifies East Hagbourne as a smaller village where infill is permitted, in accordance with the relevant policy criteria (CSR1). This site, although in East Hagbourne parish, is not within the village itself as it lies on the edge of the parish adjoining the built up area of Didcot. In terms of meeting Didcot's housing needs there is no defined boundary in the Development Plan by which housing should be located and it is considered this site on the southern edge of Didcot can contribute to the housing need for Didcot. It is argued

¹ 1) Winterbrook, Wallingford (P15/S0191/FUL) and 2) Chinnor (P15/S0154/O)

² The mid-range SHMA figure of 750 per annum (up from 547 per annum - split 300 (Didcot) / 247 (Rest of District)).

by Didcot Town Council, East Hagbourne parish council, MtGG and others that this site is not within Didcot as it is within the parish of East Hagbourne. However the council invariably has to consider locations beyond the settlement or parish boundaries when looking at sites for housing (e.g. both Great Western Park and Didcot North East when allocated were beyond the Didcot parish boundary). The location of this site, on the edge of Didcot, is such that it complies with the Core Strategy's distribution strategy and it can assist in meeting the shortfall in the Didcot housing supply. Given these particular circumstances policy CSR1 has limited weight as it is a housing policy that restricts supply.

- 6.6 In respect of Didcot's housing supply (and in the context of the recent appeal decisions the housing supply across the District) paragraph 49 of the NPPF applies, determining that limited weight should be given to the council's policies on the supply of housing. Paragraph 14 is also engaged wherein it states that permission should be granted unless there are any adverse impacts that significantly and demonstrably (my emphasis) outweigh the benefits or specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. The impacts of the development and their relative significance in are discussed below and the planning balance is weighed up in the conclusion of the report.

Sustainability - Location

- 6.7 The site is situated about a kilometre from Jubilee Way roundabout where Aldi supermarket is located and about 1.2 km from Didcot Town Centre and its shops and facilities. It is within easy cycling distance and a bus service also serves New Road and East Hagbourne. The public footpath to the north permits good access for walking and also pedestrian links into Fleet Meadow development to the north.
- 6.8 In terms of facilities, there are allotments adjoining the site and the Fleet Meadow community centre north of the allotments. Other facilities e.g. schools are within 1.2km walking distance. There are also facilities within East Hagbourne village, also about 1.2km away. Facilities are therefore within walking and cycling distance, or a short bus journey or drive. The site adjoins and is opposite existing residential development with good connections to local services and facilities. The site is in a sustainable location.

Layout and Design

- 6.9 The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes (paras 56 and 57). Developments should function well, establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks; respond to local character and history, create safe and accessible environments, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping and promote local distinctiveness.
- 6.10 The layout is illustrative at this stage. The parameter plans submitted with the application indicate that taller buildings would be within the development rather than on the edges, so as to assimilate with the surrounding countryside more easily. The green infrastructure link adjoins the public footpath and provides an amenity area that can complement the use of the public footpath including play and walking. Housing faces the external boundaries of the development which follows design principles for

surveillance and the public realm. Planting is proposed along all boundaries but only at the south west corner is a significant screen planting proposed alongside the single storey residential property. At detailed stage care would be taken to site neighbouring properties so that they relate in scale and do not give any rise to loss of privacy and also to ensure buildings do not cause problems to trees. Permitted development rights could be removed at reserved matters stage if necessary. The density of the development is such that it optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development whilst providing a mix of housing and green space, meeting the NPPF design objectives.

Natural Environment – Landscape and Biodiversity

- 6.11 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF lists the circumstances in which the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and relevant to this application these matters could include potentially:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate

Landscape

- 6.12 A core principle of the NPPF (paras 17 and 109) is that the planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and protect and enhance valued landscapes. The NPPF recognises that great weight be given to AONB considerations and recognises it as an area with the highest status of protection, where weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of AONB. The site is not covered by any landscape designations, however the hills of the North Wessex Downs AONB are 400 m to the east of the site and are visible from the site.
- 6.13 Mind the Green Gap and the Parish Council are concerned about the methodology of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted by the applicant. The council's landscape officer has not raised any concerns with the methodology and concludes she largely agrees with the findings. The main issues raised in respect of landscape concern:
- The closure of the gap between the settlements of Didcot and East Hagbourne
 - The impact on the AONB
 - The impact on the public footpath
 - The impact of highway works
- 6.14 The site frontage currently forms an open and tree lined gap in the New Road frontage between the ribbon residential development on New Road to the south and the allotments in Didcot. A public footpath runs immediately north of the site and leads east before turning south towards the village of East Hagbourne. There are views across the site from the public footpath as well as New Road itself. This gap has been recognised in council policy evidence (Didcot Core Strategy Background Paper - March 2011)

however there is no Development Plan policy requiring the preservation of the gap or prevention of coalescence. There is no requirement in the NPPF to prevent coalescence between settlements although it does seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness (para 60). The opposite (west) side of New Road forms a continuous frontage of housing. Arguably you could say that the separation between the two settlements has been compromised but you could also say that the retention of this gap (the site) becomes more important.

- 6.15 Undoubtedly the development will reduce this visual gap and the proposed access road and emergency access will urbanise the frontage. Previous decisions on developments in the 1980's considered by Inspectors on appeal gave significant weight to the public footpath boundary delineating the settlement of Didcot and the visual gap between the two parishes. Development north of the public footpath was allowed and exists today but housing development and a road immediately south and crossing the public footpath were refused on the grounds of visual impact and that a buffer was desirable.
- 6.16 The current scheme proposes mitigation in the form of a wide green infrastructure wedge south of and adjoining the public footpath and also space on the north west corner parallel to the allotments. An existing open play space area south of Saxon Way also adjoins the footpath, consolidating the public open space in this area. The scheme retains the frontage trees where possible and this will be enhanced by further planting. The access and main road serving the site is midway through the development and will not 'carve' the footpath as the 1980's road proposal. In summary the proposed layout and planting will mitigate the built form of the development and there will remain an open gap with some views through afforded, albeit much reduced. There will also be a tangible division of open space between the two parishes.
- 6.17 Although the site itself is not covered by any landscape designations it does provide attractive views to the AONB. The LVIA does not identify any material adverse impacts in relation to the AONB and neither does the council's landscape officer. There has been a late response from the AONB board, who are raising objection stating that 'the proposed scheme would add an urban extension to this rural locality, and be of detriment to the special qualities of the AONB which fails to reflect the character of the existing settlement'. Given the timing there is no scope to engage the AONB board as to whether any revisions may overcome their objection, however given the scale of the proposals this is unlikely. Officers accept that there will be a change to views to and from the AONB and to the landscape setting of the settlements. Policy C4 (SOLP) is relevant, advising that development which would damage the attractive landscape setting of the settlements of the district will not be permitted and that the effect of any proposal on important local landscape features which contribute to the visual and historic character and appearance of a settlement will be considered. Currently, the defined tree lined boundary of the south of Didcot is visible from New Road and the public footpaths. Views of the Didcot settlement boundary will become restricted although the mitigation proposed by the green infrastructure link will enable the retention of important landscape features, an attractive public footpath route, a distinct parish boundary, a visual gap and will allow views towards the AONB. It is accepted that the landscape setting of East Hagbourne will become more urban and closer to the AONB than exists at present. However the existing development of East Hagbourne and Didcot is already contiguous on the west side of New Road.
- 6.18 To summarise the landscape impacts, the amount of development will have a minor adverse landscape impact on the setting of Didcot and East Hagbourne and will reduce the visual gap between the parish boundaries. However neither the landscape of the site nor the open gap are afforded special protection. The landscape setting and wider views are valued by the community and there is an objection from the AONB board. In weighing the balance between the social benefits of providing housing and the impacts

upon the landscape setting of Didcot and East Hagbourne, the visual gap and the openness afforded to AONB views, I conclude that in the context of a lack of a 5 year housing supply and the requirements of the NPPF, the landscape impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the housing benefits of this scheme, which includes 40% affordable housing (discussed below) and incorporates proposed landscaping and open space.

Biodiversity

- 6.19 The applicant has submitted a Green Infrastructure Strategy which outlines the approach to green infrastructure on the site. The amended scheme enhances the space and provides a multi-functional green infrastructure link which can also contribute to biodiversity. It is recognised that the amount of space is not what is envisaged in the Didcot Greenspace Network Feasibility Study. The conclusions of this study will be considered further in the Didcot Garden Town proposals, which currently do not carry any firm proposals or weight. It is not possible to seek further off site green infrastructure to the south as the land is not within the applicant's control. Contributions towards green infrastructure could be sought through CIL monies. I conclude that there is no material objection that outweighs the benefit of the proposal.

Agricultural Land

- 6.20 NPPF Para 112 states that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, LPA's should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. The site is very good agricultural land quality Grade 2. Development of this site will reduce the availability of very good agricultural land by 7 ha and this needs to be weighed against the benefits of housing supply. This site is considered a sustainable location for housing and in the context of the need for housing, there is not an alternative area of poorer quality agricultural land that could be used.

Transport

- 6.21 There has been a considerable degree of objection on traffic and highway grounds. The highway authority initially identified concerns with the access and required an emergency access and a controlled crossing. The agreed scheme will provide an emergency access to the south of the main access and new pedestrian crossing facilities on New Road on both sides of the proposed access. The highway authority also requested a right hand turn lane from New Road however the transport assessment predicts only a handful of right turns within an hour during peak times and on this basis a right turn lane is not required.
- 6.22 Objectors have also been raised in respect of the accuracy of the transport assessment. The highway authority has reviewed the TA and does not have any concerns with the accuracy. More widely the highway authority have identified that there will be direct impacts on Jubilee roundabout to the north and require contributions towards improvements. The applicant is agreeable to the level of contribution sought. Parking will be dealt with at reserved matters stage but the density of the development is such that satisfactory car parking should be easily accommodated. There is no objection on highway grounds.

Air Quality

- 6.23 Traffic arising from the development will have an increased impact on air quality. The air quality officer has identified need for mitigation and monies can be sought through for CIL for off-site measures. Also OCC have requested S106 monies to fund an improved bus service serving the site. A travel plan, cycle parking and electric charging required by conditions will also encourage more sustainable forms of transport.

Construction

- 6.24 During construction there are will be environmental impacts arising from traffic and construction. It is important therefore to control hours of operation, traffic movements, parking for site operatives, provide facilities for wheel washing and controls for noise and dust. Standard practice is to require a Construction Traffic and Management Plan by condition.

Drainage

- 6.25 Many representations raise the issue of drainage and flooding. The development proposes a number of swales and attenuation including a pond to cater for surface water runoff and drainage. The pond will be in the north east corner, at the lowest point of the site. There is no technical objection on drainage or flooding grounds subject to detailed design. Thames Water has raised the issue of foul water capacity in the locality. This will need to be the subject of an agreement between the statutory undertaker and the developer and the council will seek that this has been resolved before development begins.

Lighting

- 6.26 New development will inevitably cause increased light pollution. It is recommended that street and external lighting are controlled via condition, for the benefit of biodiversity and general amenity.

Housing

- 6.27 The NPPF advises that the planning system should provide a supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations (para 7) and that councils should:
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
 - plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community
 - where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (para 50)
- 6.28 Policy CSH3 seeks 40% affordable housing comprising with a tenure mix of 75% affordable rented and 25% intermediate e.g. shared ownership. If the development accommodates 170 dwellings, 68 will be affordable. Policy CSH4 seeks a range in mix to meet housing needs. The SHMA gives an indicative mix for both affordable and market mix in South Oxfordshire recognising that regard should be had to the nature of the development site and character of the area, and to up to date evidence of need as well as the existing mix and turnover of properties at the local level. The proposed development mix is set out below.

Table 1 Proposed Development Mix

Bed Totals	Affordable rented	Shared Ownership / Intermediate	Market	Overall Number/ (Percentage – rounded)
1 Bed	6 (9%)			6 (3.5%)
2 Bed	31 (45.5%)	11 (16%)	23 (22%)	65 (38 %)
3 Bed	14 (20.5%)	6 (9%)	39 (38%)	60 (35 %)
4 Bed			35 (35%)	35 (20.5 %)
5 Bed			5 (5%)	5 (3 %)
Total	51 (75% of AH)	17 (25% of AH)	102	170

- 6.29 The indicative SHMA mix is below. The market mix for smaller dwellings (1 and 2 bed) on the proposed development is slightly under the SHMA suggested mix (25% compared to SHMA 30%) although when the affordable dwellings are included the figure is closer (41.5% compared to SHMA 45%). The SHMA Housing mix figures are not prescriptive and the proposed mix is considered acceptable.

Table 2 : Suggested SHMA mix

	Affordable %	Market %	Overall Percentage %
1 bed	25-30	5	15
2 bed	30-35	25	30
3 bed	30-35	40	40
4 bed	5-10	25	15

The applicants have agreed to the amount of affordable housing and tenure composition suggested by the Council's Housing Development Officer which should be secured through a S106 agreement. The actual numbers may vary depending on how many dwellings are proposed however the proportions are agreed. The housing provision proposed for the site is acceptable and meets a key objective of the NPPF to provide a supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Infrastructure

- 6.30 The Council has adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (April 2016). In East Hagbourne parish the CIL residential rate is £150 per sq. m. Monies will be levied on gross internal floorspace (in accordance with the CIL Regulations 2010 as amended). The CIL liability will be known at a detailed stage once the amount of floorspace is known. The CIL monies will be payable upon commencement. CIL is not levied on affordable housing. Indicatively at this stage it is advised that CIL monies may be in the order of £1.53 million (based on 102 market dwellings x 100 sq. m).
- 6.31 CIL is intended to contribute towards local and strategic infrastructure as identified in the Regulation 123 list and the adopted SPD Planning Obligations (April 2016). In accordance with the SPD on-site infrastructure can still be sought for site specific infrastructure including highway works required to meet the impacts of the development, open space and play areas, recycling and street-naming as well as affordable housing. Other infrastructure e.g. air quality and off site infrastructure will need to be met from CIL and other funding. Parishes will receive either 15% or 25% (if

they have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan at the relevant stage³) of the monies for infrastructure and may choose to spend it on local projects or contribute towards strategic infrastructure.

- 6.32 The matters the council are seeking through S106 are :
- 1) 40% of total housing to be affordable housing (75% of which to be affordable rented)
 - 2) Transport contributions for an improved bus service and bus stop serving the site
 - 2) Off site highway contributions to Jubilee roundabout
 - 4) On site public open space and play and provisions for maintenance
 - 5) Contributions for on-site recycling bins and street naming
- The applicant has agreed to the provision of the above.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The development is in a sustainable location. The NPPF advises a presumption in favour of sustainable development and where there is a lack of 5 year housing supply, paragraph 49 is engaged, determining that housing policies restricting the supply of housing are out of date. Paragraph 14 requires that the council should grant permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. In order to judge whether a development is sustainable it must be assessed against the economic, social and environmental planning roles.
- 7.2 The provision of housing including 40% affordable housing is a significant social benefit. The development incorporates public open space and play space which will benefit proposed and existing residents. The development will have an economic role in that it will bring construction jobs to the area for a temporary period yet there will be a minor economic dis-benefit due to the loss of the agricultural land. There will be temporary environmental impacts resulting from construction and likely negative impacts on air quality. The key environmental impact will be upon the landscape, particularly the landscape setting of Didcot and East Hagbourne, the visual gap between the two settlements and the openness afforded to AONB views and setting. However the land is not protected by either landscape designations or a policy requirement on preserving an open visual gap. When weighed in the planning balance the impacts are not considered to be significant and demonstrable. In the context of a lack of a 5 year supply of housing the proposed scheme incorporating a mix of housing, open space and landscaping, together with provision for infrastructure is considered to be outweigh the dis-benefits of the development and it is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted.

³ The date at which the last pre commencement condition is discharged.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

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

A. The completion of a S106 agreement securing:

- 1. 40% of total housing to be affordable housing (75% of which to be affordable rented)**
- 2. Transport contributions for an improved bus service and bus stop serving the site**
- 3. Off site highway contributions to Jubilee Way roundabout**
- 4. On site public open space and play and provisions for maintenance**
- 5. Contributions for on-site recycling/waste bins and street naming**

B. The following conditions:

- 1. Approved plans.**
- 2. Reserved matters.**
- 3. Tree protection.**
- 4. Archaeology.**
- 5. Construction traffic management plan including hours.**
- 6. S278 works.**
- 7. Access and vision splays.**
- 8. Travel plan including school routes.**
- 9. Turning area and parking.**
- 10. Estate roads access, footpaths.**
- 11. Foul drainage strategy and details.**
- 12. Surface water drainage details.**
- 13. Sustainable drainage system details.**
- 14. EV charging on residential properties.**
- 15. Cycle parking.**
- 16. Landscape including street furniture, cycle parking.**
- 17. Landscape management and maintenance.**
- 18. Lighting.**
- 19. Material samples.**
- 20. Recycling and waste storage.**

Author: Cathie Scotting
Email: planning@southoxon.gov.uk
Contact No: 01235 540546