

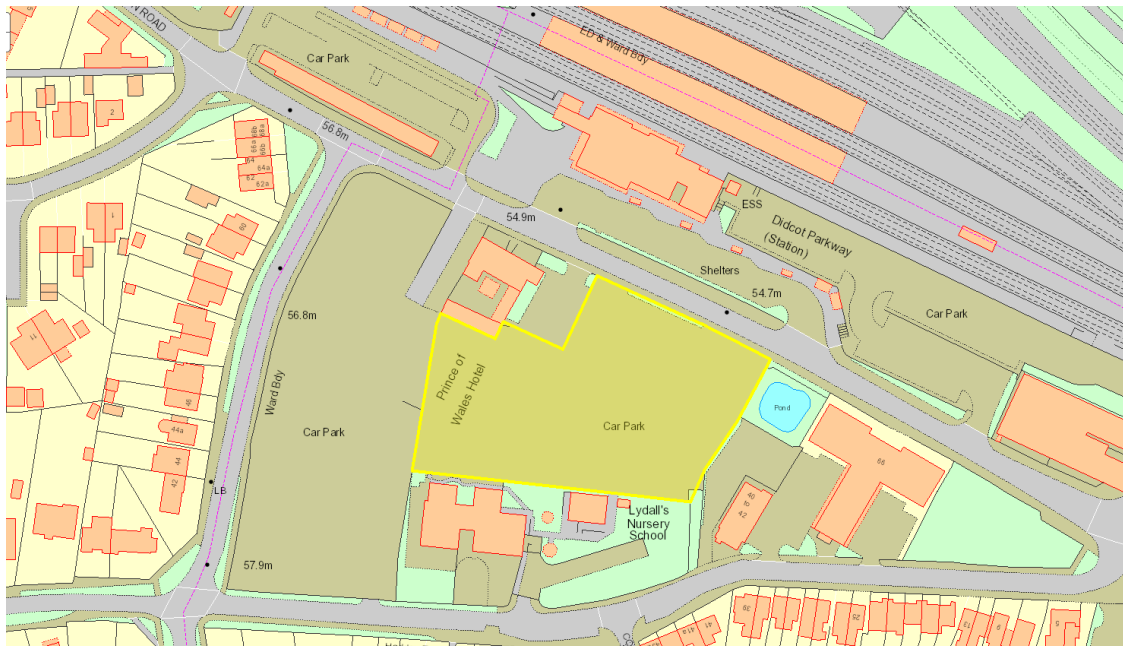
APPLICATION NO.	P23/S1775/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	7.6.2023
PARISH	DIDCOT
WARD MEMBER(S)	Denise Macdonald Axel Macdonald Mocky Khan
APPLICANT	South Oxfordshire District Council
SITE	Car Park Station Road Didcot, OX11 7NN
PROPOSAL	Change of use of land for car parking for a temporary period of two years until 2 September 2025.
OFFICER	Andy Heron

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report sets out the officer’s recommendation that planning permission should be granted having regard to the material planning considerations and the development plan.
- 1.2 The application is referred to Planning Committee at the Development Manager’s discretion on the basis that South Oxfordshire District Council is the applicant. Furthermore, an objection has been received from Didcot Town Council. The Town Council have raised concerns that the car park has been made redundant by the development of the nearby railway station car park. The Town Council consider that the site should now be used for alternative purposes which could promote the town and the wellbeing of its residents. A map extract identifying the site is **attached** at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The site lies on the south side of Station Road, opposite Didcot Parkway Railway Station, and is located to the south, and east of the Prince of Wales pub. The site covers an area of 0.53 hectares and contains 253 car parking spaces and 8 disability spaces. The Great Western Junction Hotel was formerly on the site until it was demolished in 2006. The original car park use commenced shortly after the hotel was demolished on 15 May 2006.
- 1.4 The use as a car park has been renewed on several previous occasions, with the most recent being in 2021 (P21/S3144/FUL). This application granted temporary planning permission for 2 years and expired on 12 July 2023.

PROPOSAL

- 1.5 This application seeks planning permission for the retention of the car park until 2 September 2025. A plan showing the site and surrounding area is shown below.



1.6 Copies of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** as Appendix 2 to this report. All the plans, supporting information and representations can be viewed on the council’s website www.southoxon.gov.uk under the planning application reference number.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

2.1 The comments below represent the latest comments on the scheme. Full details of the representations can be viewed on the Council’s website www.southoxon.gov.uk under the planning reference number.

<p>Didcot Town Council</p>	<p>Object. The car park has been made redundant by the redevelopment of the nearby railway station car park, which was designed to take on the full capacity of the existing temporary car park.</p> <p>As this car park land is due to be redeveloped, the council consider the land could be used for alternative purposes, which could promote the town or wellbeing of its residents and provide more variety in the area.</p> <p>The council also noted that the temporary car park has been listed as temporary for a prolonged period. The council urges the applicant to find an alternative short-term solution for the land.</p>
<p>Letters of representation</p>	<p>1 letter of objection was received which raises the following concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of need. - The impact on the character and appearance of the area. - Traffic implications. - Impact on neighbouring amenity.

Highways officer (Oxfordshire County Council)	No objection.
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3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 7 previous applications of relevance.

[P21/S3144/FUL](#) - Approved (02/09/2021)

Change of use of land for car parking for a temporary period of two years.

[P19/S1792/FUL](#) - Approved (01/08/2019)

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

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

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

[P12/S1155/FUL](#) - Approved (14/08/2012)

Change of use of land for car parking for a further temporary period of 2 years. (Variation of conditions 1 of planning permissions P06/W0283/RET and P09/W0383).

[P09/W0383](#) - Approved (23/06/2009)

Continued use of land as car park for a further temporary period of two years (without compliance of condition 1 - time limitation, of planning permission P08/W0421/RET).

[P08/W0421/RET](#) - Approved (30/05/2008)

Retention of use of land as car park for further temporary period of 1 year.

[P06/W0283/RET](#) - Approved (16/05/2006)

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

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The application has been considered under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The proposed development is not EIA development.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of any planning application must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory Development Plan comprises:

- The Local Plan 2035
- Adopted neighbourhood plans

5.2 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2035 policies which are relevant to the proposed development consist of:

DES1 - Delivering High Quality Development
DES2 - Enhancing Local Character
DES3 - Design and Access Statements
DES4 - Masterplans for Allocated Sites and Major Development
DES6 - Residential Amenity
H2 - New Housing in Didcot
ENV3 – Biodiversity
STRAT1 – The Overall Strategy
STRAT3 - Didcot Garden Town
TRANS5 - Consideration of Development Proposals
TRANS6 - Rail

5.3 Neighbourhood Plan

There is no neighbourhood plan for this area.

5.4 Other material considerations include government guidance, in particular:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- National Design Guide Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring, and successful places (NDDG)
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide 2022
- South Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (April 2020)
- South Oxfordshire Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (3 January 2023)

5.5 Other Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

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

Equality Act 2010

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

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The relevant planning considerations are the following:

- **Principle of development**
- **Impact on the character and appearance of the area**
- **Residential amenity**
- **Access and parking**

6.2 Principle of development

The site has been allocated for redevelopment as part of the wider Didcot Gateway site in the SOLP.

- 6.3 The Council has identified the site as the location for its new offices and work is underway to prepare proposals to be submitted for planning permission, alongside work on a wider masterplan of the Didcot Gateway site to bring forward development in accordance with policy STRAT3 of the SOLP.
- 6.4 This work demonstrates the Council's commitment to redevelop the site in accordance with the local plan. It is important to note that redevelopment remains subject to planning permission. Officers understand a planning application will shortly be submitted to redevelop the site.
- 6.5 The area is well served by public transport with Didcot Railway Station opposite the site. The town centre shopping area is served by a large central car park, which is situated approximately 336 metres to the east. Additional parking is also available at the recently constructed station car park, which is located approximately 350 metres to the north-west. As such, there is limited need for the car park in the long term.
- 6.6 The continued temporary car parking use until the site has been redeveloped will not hinder progression of the strategic priorities for the central area of Didcot or undermine the objectives of the development plan.
- 6.7 Didcot Town Council have concerns that the car parking is now underutilised, having been made redundant by the recently constructed multi-storey station car park. The applicants have provided data which confirms that the average number of spaces occupied per day for the last year is 154, which equates to a 61% average daily occupation rate. This data shows that the car park is still used, despite the availability of additional spaces at the multi-storey car park.
- 6.8 The applicants have confirmed that no approaches have been made from third parties with alternative temporary proposals for the site. The only real short-term possibility other than a car park would be a vacant site.
- 6.9 Officers acknowledge that the use of the site as a car park is not ideal in the long term. However, the use as a car park is acceptable for a further temporary period until redevelopment commences. Officers therefore consider that the retention of the car park until 2 September 2025 is appropriate for the proposed temporary period.
- 6.10 **Impact on the character and appearance of the area**
- Policy DES2 of the SOLP requires development to enhance local character, it states that new development must be designed to reflect the positive features that make up the character of the local area and should both physically and visually enhance and complement the surroundings.
- 6.11 In isolation, the car park does not add or contribute positively towards the street scene or to the character and appearance of this part of Didcot. It does not *'improve the physical environment of the town including the creation of high quality visual 'gateways' at the points of access into the town'*. As such, the retention of the car park would not be supported on a permanent basis.

6.12 To date no alternative temporary uses have been proposed for the site. An alternative to the car park would be a vacant site which is surrounded by hoardings to restrict trespass and fly-tipping. Officers therefore consider the car park use would be a short-term material benefit for the site and its overall appearance.

6.13 Although the car park use will not enhance and improve the character of the surrounding area, it will temporarily make the best use of the land.

6.14 Residential amenity

Policy DES6 of SOLP aims to protect the amenity of neighbouring uses from loss of privacy or day/sunlight, visual intrusion, noise, contamination, or external lighting.

6.15 Neighbouring properties are a good distance away and any impacts will not be any greater than currently exist. As such the continued use will not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses and complies with policy DES6 of the SOLP.

6.16 Access and parking

Policy TRANS5 of the SOLP requires development to provide safe and convenient access for all users to the highway.

6.17 The temporary use continues an existing car park use with associated access. No enlargement of the car park or further building development is proposed. The proposal presents no highway safety or transport concerns and no issues have been raised by Oxfordshire County Council's highways liaison officer.

6.18 In view of the above the development accords with policy TRANS5 of the SOLP.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application has been assessed against relevant policies in the development plan, the NPPF, PPG, the adopted SPDs and all other relevant material planning considerations.

7.2 Subject to requiring that the use ceases on 2 September 2025, the use will not undermine regeneration of the site; nor have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the site or surrounding area. In the interim, it will make the best use of the land. Furthermore, there will be no adverse highway impact. As such, the development accords with the relevant development plan policies.

7.3 Overall, in the planning balance, the benefits of the development outweigh any potential harm. As such, the application is recommended for approval.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

To grant Planning Permission subject to the following conditions

- 1. Temporary use of land**
- 2. Approved plans**

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