

# **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## **Purpose of document**

This report sets out Oxfordshire County Council's view on the proposal.

This report contains officer advice in the form of a strategic localities response and technical team response(s). Where local member have responded these have been attached by OCCs Major Planning Applications Team ([planningconsultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:planningconsultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk)).

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## **Strategic Comments**

### **Comments:**

#### **Overall view of Oxfordshire County Council:**

No objection subject to conditions and contributions

### **Comments:**

These comments follow those provided on the original application in May 2015 and the partial amendment in October 2015. The objections made by Oxfordshire County Council at those times have been addressed and subject to appropriate conditions and contributions being agreed, Oxfordshire County Council objection is no longer raised.

The site is included as a draft allocation in the Submitted Vale of White Horse Local Plan. In that Plan it is identified as a site for 2,550 homes, a number which is understood to have been derived on the basis of likely deliverability by the end of the Plan period to 2031 rather than capacity of the site.

The number of houses now being applied for on this site, 4254(1,704 more than in the Submitted Local Plan), together with other developments, is of concern to the County Council due to the pressure this will place on the transport network. Transport modelling in 2014 identified a suite of strategic transport schemes required before 2031 to cater for growth anticipated in the Submitted Local Plan, but extra growth will create additional needs. Having considered the revised Transport Assessment for this development proposal, and subject to an appropriate agreement on contributions towards the identified strategic transport schemes required before 2031 (Science Bridge, A4130 widening and Harwell Link Road) and a commitment to undertake the identified further schemes (at Milton Interchange, Collett and Rowstock roundabouts), it is no longer considered that an objection can be sustained on strategic transport grounds.

As a result of the amendments allowing more land for the Science Bridge, and subject to an appropriate agreement on contributions towards biodiversity offsetting, the County Council also no longer objects on ecology grounds. It is likely that adverse effects on the unimproved grassland cannot be avoided or remedied and off-site mitigation is acceptable given the importance of the development. The costs of off-site mitigation should be contributed to, in part, by this development. It is recognised that additional ecological effects resulting from the

Science Bridge will need to be assessed in future, but the Science Bridge is not part of this application and will be applied for separately by the County Council.

The County Council is generally supportive of development in this location as it can provide much needed new schools and housing. The County Council appreciates the efforts that have been made by the applicants to address many of the comments that have been made.

Detailed comments relating to conditions and contributions can be found in the annexes. The headlines are:

### Transport

- The application is outline only except in relation to the accesses. The T-junction signalised access onto the A4130 is acceptable. It is understood that this will be built first and can cater for a level of development which will be conditioned upon an agreed phasing strategy. The eastern roundabout access onto the A4130 has been amended for this application and is acceptable although crossings for pedestrians and cyclists will need to be conditioned. A condition is needed in respect of the eastern roundabout to allow for it to be enlarged to cater for the planned A4130 widening. The access onto the B4493 has been amended for this application to clarify rights-of-way and is acceptable although a condition is required to formalise the crossings. It is understood that the access to the B4493 can be built as a three-arm roundabout first if needed and later amended to the five-arm roundabout. The access mid-way on the Harwell Link Road is acceptable and a condition should recognise that there is land set aside to allow this T-junction to be later amended to a roundabout if necessary.
- The site needs to be served by bus services that will be attractive to residents. This requires key roads to be appropriately designed and an agreed specification for pump primed bus services.
- As well as the developer improving on-site public rights of way, a contribution will be required towards improving off-site rights of way which will face increased use.
- A Framework Master Travel Plan is required in accordance with County guidance for large developments to encourage sustainable travel.
- A surface water drainage scheme for the site is required, including details of management of SUDS features.
- There are a number of points of detail regarding the spine road which remain to be agreed as set out in the annexes e.g. the design of traffic calming, hybrid cycle lanes, bus stops and the quantum of direct vehicle parking on private property. The spine road is of particular importance to the County Council as it will be part of a high frequency bus route (as set out in the Local Transport Plan 4) as well as a key corridor for Valley Park's residents.
- The connections to Public Rights of Way will need to be clarified to ensure that these are used as appropriate both for commuter and leisure trips. Where possible, routes should be available for cyclists rather than being footpaths only.

### Ecology

- There is concern about the ecological impacts of the proposed Science Bridge, but that scheme itself is not part of this application. It is considered that adequate land is being provided to avoid, remedy or mitigate effects when the County Council prepares an application for this item of infrastructure. However, this application will, of its own, result in the potential loss of unimproved grassland (UK Priority Habitat) and therefore a contribution to mitigation through biodiversity offsetting is required.

## Education

- The location of the three school sites as set out on the Parameter Plan (including the revised location of the SEN school) is generally acceptable. Additional information will be required at Reserved Matters to ensure that these sites meet the County Council's requirements, for example in relation to noise, the provision of safe access points, and the location of drop off parking.

## Archaeology

- The applicant has undertaken the required pre-determination archaeological evaluation. A condition should be imposed requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation and recording in advance of development.

## Extra Care Housing

- Provision of 60-80 Extra Care housing apartments has been sought on previous comments. A condition for 70 Extra Care housing apartments is appropriate. It is recognised that these are not shown on the illustrative masterplan but there is sufficient flexibility on this large site to provide them.

## Employment and Skills Plan

- A condition should be imposed requiring an Employment and Skills Plan.

**S106 Contributions (please note this is advisory only at this stage and does not include direct delivery S278/S38 costs, further detail can be found in the annexes):**

	<b>Towards</b>	<b>Cost Basis</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Transport</b>	Manor Bridge Relief (Science Bridge)	£2,886 per dwelling Q3 2015	904	£2,608,944
	A4130 widening	£2,886 per dwelling Q3 2015	2,712	£7,826,832
	Harwell Link Road	£2,886 per dwelling Q3 2015	638	£1,841,268
	Land for Science Bridge, A4130 widening and Harwell Link Road	To be agreed		To be agreed
	Public Transport bus services	2015 price, not index linked as it is to be procured by applicant.	-	£3,600,000
	Bus stop infrastructure	2015 price, not index linked as it is to be partly procured by applicant and partly invoiced for actual cost. Estimate of £11,000 per stop on average.	18	£198,000
	Public Rights of Way	Q3 2015		£250,000
	Framework Master Travel Plan monitoring	Not index linked		£7,800
	Supplementary travel plans for schools and local centres	To be agreed at later stages		£0 at outline
	<b>Ecology</b>	Biodiversity offsetting to mitigate loss of unimproved neutral grassland	Contribution to estimated cost of £400,000 - £550,000. Not index linked.	
<b>Education</b>	Two new primary schools on site	The full cost of 2 x 2 form entry primary school @ £9,494,387 Q3 2015. Developer delivery of these schools would be an acceptable alternative.	840 (805 places currently assessed)	£18,988,774
	Secondary school	£21,000 per pupil Q3 2015	714	£14,994,000

	capacity at Great Western Park			
	Provision of SEN school capacity on site	£72,500 per pupil Q3 2015	17	£1,232,500
	Land for schools	The provision of 1 x 3.1ha site for a 2FE primary school capable of expansion to 3FE; 1 x 2.2ha site for a 2FE primary school; 1 x 1.6ha site for a SEN school. Credit for SEN land provision estimated at - £73,650.		To be agreed
<b>Property and Waste</b>	Didcot Library	£98 per new resident Q3 2015	9,685	£949,130
	Central Library	£19.77 per new resident Q3 2015	9,685	£191,473
	Adult Day Care	£131.63 per new resident aged 65+	1,204	£158,483
	Administration and monitoring for property	-		£21,700.56

**Officer's Name: Lynette Hughes**

**Officer's Title: Senior Planning Officer**

**Date: 06 April 2016**

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## **Transport**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection.

As submitted and subject to the recommended planning conditions and S106 obligations, the development is considered sustainable, would not result in severe harm to the safety or convenience of highway users as set out in paragraph 32 of National Planning Policy Framework and would support the sustainable transport aspirations of the County Council as Local Highway Authority in accordance with the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan.

### **Key issues:**

- Traffic Impact
- Highway Safety
- Strategic Transport Infrastructure Delivery
- Phasing
- Inclusion of controlled pegasis crossings to both Northern and Southern Site access roads in vicinity of B4493 Roundabout

### **Legal agreement required to secure:**

Planning obligations will be required to be secured by agreement under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act, and will include matters subject to Sections 38 and 278 of the Highways Act. Discussions regarding the phasing of development and triggers for works schedules and payments are ongoing.

### **Access and Local Mitigation**

The developer will be obliged to provide all access works, vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist, details of which shall be included in a works schedule(s) (to include in principle drawings and land dedication plans where required) subject to Section 278 within the Section 106 Agreement. Works shall include, where appropriate, links to the existing off-site pedestrian and cyclist network. In the case of the five arm roundabout, junction of B4493 with Northern and Southern Access Roads and Harwell Valley Link Road controlled Pegasus type crossings will be required on the Northern and Southern Access roads.

The developer will be obliged to provide improvements to Milton Interchange, details of which shall be included in a works schedule(s) (to include in principle drawings and land dedication plans where required) subject to Section 278 within the Section 106 Agreement.

The developer will be obliged to provide improvements at the junction of A417 and A4130 Rowstock Roundabout, details of which shall be included in a works schedule(s) subject to Section 278 within the Section 106 Agreement.

The developer will be obliged to provide improvements at the junction of A4130, Collett and private access road, details of which shall be included in a works schedule(s) subject to Section 278 within the Section 106 Agreement.

### **Strategic Transport Infrastructure**

£2,886 [Q3 2015 price base] per dwelling has been established for contributions to improved strategic transport infrastructure in Science Vale, to mitigate the cumulative impact of growth as set out in the County Council's Local Transport Plan 4. Contributions from this development will fund, in part, Science Bridge (the proposed project to provide relief to Manor Bridge), A4130 widening and the Harwell Link Road. It will be important to receive these contributions in a timely manner. The proportion of contribution to each element of strategic infrastructure is set-out in the table below.

<b>Towards</b>	<b>Cost Basis</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Total</b>
Science Bridge	£2,886 per dwelling Q3 2015	904	£2,608,944
A4130 widening	£2,886 per dwelling Q3 2015	2,712	£7,826,832
Harwell Link Road	£2,886 per dwelling Q3 2015	638	£1,841,268

### **Public Transport**

An agreed specification for pump primed bus services will be required. The developer will be required to procure the agreed services, which have been estimated at £3,600,000.

Bus shelters, real-time information displays and pole/flag/information units at bus stops must be provided and a sum provided for maintenance. Bus shelters can be delivered directly by the developer but the costs of the real-time displays, poles and flags will be required as an obligation as they may be sourced from only County Council contracts. An indicative cost per stop is £11,000.

Bus stop infrastructure for all bus stops required on site will need to be provided, such as any bus stop cages on the carriageway, hardstandings, connecting footpaths and pedestrian crossing arrangements as appropriate.

### **Public Rights of Way**

£250,000 (Q3, 2015) will be required towards off-site access mitigation measures on public rights of way in the vicinity – focused on the 12 key public rights of way schemes outside of the development site, including key links to the Ridgeway National Trail, parts of Thames Path National Trail, and those multiuser routes which form a network for walkers, cyclist and equestrians. This will fund surface, drainage, furniture and other access infrastructure.

Provision will need to be made for Non-Motorised User connections at Cow Lane over the A34 and the 'community link' route around the western end of GWP.

## **Travel Plan**

£7,800 (not index linked) will be required to monitor the Framework Master Travel Plan which will act as an umbrella travel plan for the whole site. Additional travel plans and associated monitoring fees will be required for any other elements that make up the proposed development and are over the travel plan thresholds. Both the provision and monitoring of travel plans shall be included within Planning Obligations to be set out in the Section 106 Agreement.

## **Conditions:**

If the Local Planning Authority is minded to grant planning permission then imposition of conditions relating to the following matters is recommended:-

1. The development shall not be implemented until a strategy for phasing the development has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Subsequently the development shall be implemented in accordance with approved strategy.
2. No residential unit shall be occupied until the vehicular access and pedestrian links to the existing highway, associated parking and turning areas have been constructed in accordance with approved details.
3. No non-residential unit shall be put to use until the vehicular access and pedestrian links to the existing highway, associated parking and turning areas have been constructed in accordance with approved details. This shall include any communal parking that may be provided, for example at a local centre.
4. Development shall not begin until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro-geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.  
NB. The submission should include but not be limited to, discharge rates, discharge volumes, maintenance and management of SUDS features, sizing of features – attenuation volume, infiltration in accordance with BRE365, detailed drainage layout with pipe numbers, SUDS (list the suds features mentioned within the FRA to ensure they are carried forward into the detailed drainage strategy), Network drainage calculations.
5. The development shall not be implemented until a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Subsequently the development shall be implemented in accordance with approved plan.

## **Informatives:**

- A. Please note the Advance Payments Code (APC), Sections 219 -225 of the Highways Act, is in force in the county to ensure financial security from the developer to off-set the frontage owners' liability for private street works, typically in the form of a cash deposit or bond. Should a developer wish for a street or estate to remain private then to secure exemption from the APC procedure a 'Private Road Agreement' must be

entered into with the County Council to protect the interests of prospective frontage owners.

- B. There shall be no diversion or obstruction of public rights of way, nor shall any public right of way be used for vehicular access without the prior permission of Oxfordshire County Council.
- C. It is the responsibility of the developer to ensure proper provision is made for the surface water drainage of the site to ground, watercourse or surface water sewer. To avoid foul sewer flooding, surface water must not be drained to a foul sewer. The use of sustainable drainage systems (known as SUDS) is very much encouraged. SUDS offer an alternative approach to traditional engineered drainage solutions by detaining run-off on site and releasing it slowly into watercourses or to ground (e.g. dry ditches/swales, detention/attenuation ponds, integrated wetlands). Source control techniques are also increasingly popular – e.g. the use of porous (as opposed to impermeable) paving and 'green roofs' which allow rainwater re-use. These techniques reduce the likelihood of flash flooding, result in greatly improved water quality, are often cheaper and easier to maintain than traditional engineered drainage solutions (i.e. involving seal-trapped gullies and petrol interceptors), and can provide wildlife habitats.
- D. Full outline details of any proposed highway structures (including retaining walls, culverts, bridges and footbridges) shall be submitted to the County Bridges Team to determine the extent of approvals required. Where structures are proposed for adoption, including those which will support the Public Highway, the processes set out in BD 2/12 - Technical Approval of Highway Structures shall be followed. An Approval in Principle, Design and Check Certificates and Construction Compliance Certificates may be required for each individual structure. Similar processes shall be followed to ensure the integrity of any existing Highway Structures where they may be affected by the development proposals. Technical Approval will also be required for any structures constructed on private land, including walls and basements, which affect the support of the Highway. The design of any structures proposed for adoption shall ensure that dedicated access routes are provided to all parts of the structure and that easements are incorporated to provide a maintenance strip around the structure perimeter. Technical Approval will be required prior to the commencement of any site-work. Comprehensive "As Built" details and a Health & Safety File for each completed structure to be adopted should be submitted subsequently.

### **Detailed comments:**

This application follows a previous submission and a number of amendments/additions are welcomed, including:-

- Provision of a 'double roundabout' to provide for access from A4130 and to the proposed Science Bridge
- Milton Interchange 'future' improvements
- Provision for A4130 widening
- Provision for the Harwell Link Road
- Improved permeability, links to Great Western Park and North West Valley Park
- Further consideration of non-motorised highway users and public transport

The submitted amended application includes a revised transport assessment (TA) which has been produced to address the transport concerns of the County Council. The applicant has

been in discussion with the County Council and has undertaken considerable modelling and analysis of the local highway network. Whilst subjective, the findings and conclusions of the TA are considered fair.

The TA informs both off-site works and the design of the access arrangements and its integration with the existing highway network and future network with identified strategic improvements. The TA has considered the impact of development traffic in future years with the inclusion of traffic growth and planned infrastructure.

Relevant strategic improvements in the vicinity include the current funded works at Milton Interchange; the proposed Science Bridge (not yet fully designed nor funded); the Harwell Link Road (consented to in March 2015 - R3.0133/14 – for which the majority of funding has been secured but a portion is outstanding); and the A4130 widening (not yet fully designed nor funded).

The traffic generation of the site has been estimated using the TRICS database with network analysis undertaken using the County's own network model OSM and industry standard junction modelling software Linsig, Arcady and Picady. Critical network peak hours were considered and for robustness at sensitive junctions a broader peak period was considered to allow for queueing present at the start of the analysis period. The impact analysis has been verified by both County Council Officers and independent transport consultants.

The TA has demonstrated, subject to the identified mitigation and strategic infrastructure, the development traffic would not have an unacceptable impact upon highway capacity and the consequential delay to highway users. However, the TA does little to consider the phasing of the development and the impact of development traffic prior to the provision of mitigation and strategic infrastructure. As the development builds out so its traffic impact will increase and so it is important the mitigation and strategic infrastructure are provided accordingly. An agreed phasing plan with clear triggers for provision of mitigation and contributions, therefore, will be essential and is proposed as a condition.

All of the relevant strategic infrastructure relies upon additional developer funding and the timing of its delivery is not known precisely. Flexibility to direct funds from this development to each of the three schemes will be essential to ensure impact is minimised during the construction period.

Within the site phasing is required to consider access to local amenities and most pertinently schools.

The TA has considered accident records for the local highway network and concludes there is not anything attributable to a deficiency in the highway; albeit some concern is noted at the number of accidents involving vulnerable road users, pedestrians and cyclists.

## **Accesses**

The developer will be obliged to provide all access works, vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist, details of which shall be included in a works schedule(s) subject to Section 278 within the Section 106 Agreement. Works shall include, where appropriate, links to the existing off-site pedestrian and cyclist network. Land dedication will be required. All access works have been subject to Road Safety Audit stage 1, Designer's Response and where applicable an amended scheme.

The following matters must be included/ considered in any submission for technical approval of S278 works:-

- Junction/ roundabouts are to be designed to DMRB and any departures or relaxations are to be agreed with OCC prior to technical submission.
- A list of all relaxations and departures for all associated junctions/roundabouts.
- All land which visibility splays (Inc. forward visibilities) fall over is required to be adopted by OCC.
- Tracking drawings required for all new junctions.
- Highway structures are required (culverts) and as such the developers attention is drawn to informative note D above.

The County Council has always stated a preference for a 'double roundabout' option for the Science Bridge and access to the A4130 as it better accords with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and would provide greater capacity ie it would be safer and more convenient. The applicant has amended the previous proposal to reflect this preference and the submitted plans provide an acceptable solution, in principle. The TA demonstrates this access arrangement would operate without undue delay in future years. It is recognised that the roundabout on the A4130 will need to be enlarged to cater for dual carriageway.

The western access onto the A4130 is proposed as a signalised junction. The first phase of development is proposed from this access. Modelling shows appropriate capacity can be provided.

A 5arm roundabout is proposed on the B4493, spine road, HLR and a new road into the southern part of the development. Concerns have been raised previously as to safety and convenience of this arrangement for pedestrian and especially users of the bridleway. Following a road safety audit an amended scheme has been proposed and subject to the provision of a controlled pegasis type crossing to both the Southern and Northern Site Access Roads, to be shown on plan 10219-HL-61, is considered appropriate. This amended plan shall be submitted prior to planning committee.

The County Council has a preference for a roundabout mid-way on the Harwell Link Road (HLR). Whilst provision is made for a future roundabout in this location, the applicant's proposal is for a form of priority junction. This form of junction is acceptable, however land should be dedicated which would allow for a roundabout if subsequently required.

### **Direct Mitigation Highway Improvements**

The developer will be obliged to provide the following mitigation works, details of which shall be included in a works schedule(s) subject to Section 278 within the Section 106 Agreement. Works shall include, where appropriate, links to the existing off-site pedestrian and cyclist network and any necessary land dedication. All works have been subject to Road Safety Audit stage 1, Designer's Response and where applicable an amended scheme.

Milton Interchange is undergoing improvement works planned in conjunction with the Local Plan and Transport Plan. The increased scale of this development will require further improvements to increase capacity yet further. These improvements will not be required for some time, subject to further investigation and agreement it is expected the need for such works would be triggered midway through the occupation of the development. The submitted proposal has followed an iterative design procedure and would provide the necessary capacity.

Relatively minor alterations to the junction of the A417 with A4130 (Rowstock roundabout) and the junction of A4130 with Collett and a private access would provide increased capacity appropriately.

## Layout

The internal road layout is not necessarily a matter for consideration at this stage; however the following comments are provided to advise future detailed plans.

The layout should provide appropriately for sustainable modes of transport, walking, cycling and public transport. Speed restraint will be required throughout the site to provide a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition to Great Western Park routes and Didcot Town Centre due consideration must be given to routes to major employment areas such as Milton Park and Harwell Campus, which are well within a reasonable cycling distance.

The spine road and primary routes will play a key role in accommodating essential bus services, linking the development with education, employment and other amenities. To support a viable and practical level of service the design of bus routes must ensure that buses are not unduly delayed. On-street parking should be minimised; traffic calming agreed with OCC so as not to preclude the effective operation of public transport; and the quantum of direct frontage vehicular access should be minimised.

The following informal comments are provided with regard to the submitted Design and Access statement:

### N-S Main Street

'Hybrid cycle lanes' should be referred to. It is important to distinguish between painted cycle lanes on the carriageway and hybrid lanes that are segregated from general traffic and pedestrians on footways.

### Vignettes

The layouts on pages 59 to 61 of the D&A statement clearly show 1.5m cycle lanes on both sides in addition to the carriageway width. This is appropriate in terms of space for cycling on the carriageway. As the design allows sufficient space for cyclists and other users, there should be a means of separation where appropriate, through a hybrid design where there is some form of physical infrastructure to help protect cycle space from vehicle encroachment (and parking), such as kerbing (the separation of one of the cycle lanes along Donnington Bridge Road in Oxford is an old example of this idea). Alternatively, this can be achieved by raising the height of the cycle lanes to above carriageway but below pavement.

Wherever parking is agreed and provided on the main streets a buffer zone should be provided to protect cyclists from car doors opening.

At the Gateway area it is important that there is a safe, continuous and convenient transfer to connect hybrid cycle lanes to the off-carriageway cycle paths on the A4130.

Bus stops should be 'online' and not in lay-bys. 'Floating bus stops' should be incorporated to enable hybrid cycle lanes to run around the back of bus stops. This minimises the conflict between cyclists, buses and general traffic but also the conflict between bus patrons and cyclists at bus stops.

Cycle parking should be located at bus stops to provide people with options for reaching the premium bus routes from all areas of the development.

#### Cow Lane bridleway

It is intended to convert this into a green corridor. Care is needed that it doesn't become an overgrown wild area of wasteland. It should be lit.

#### Five arm roundabout

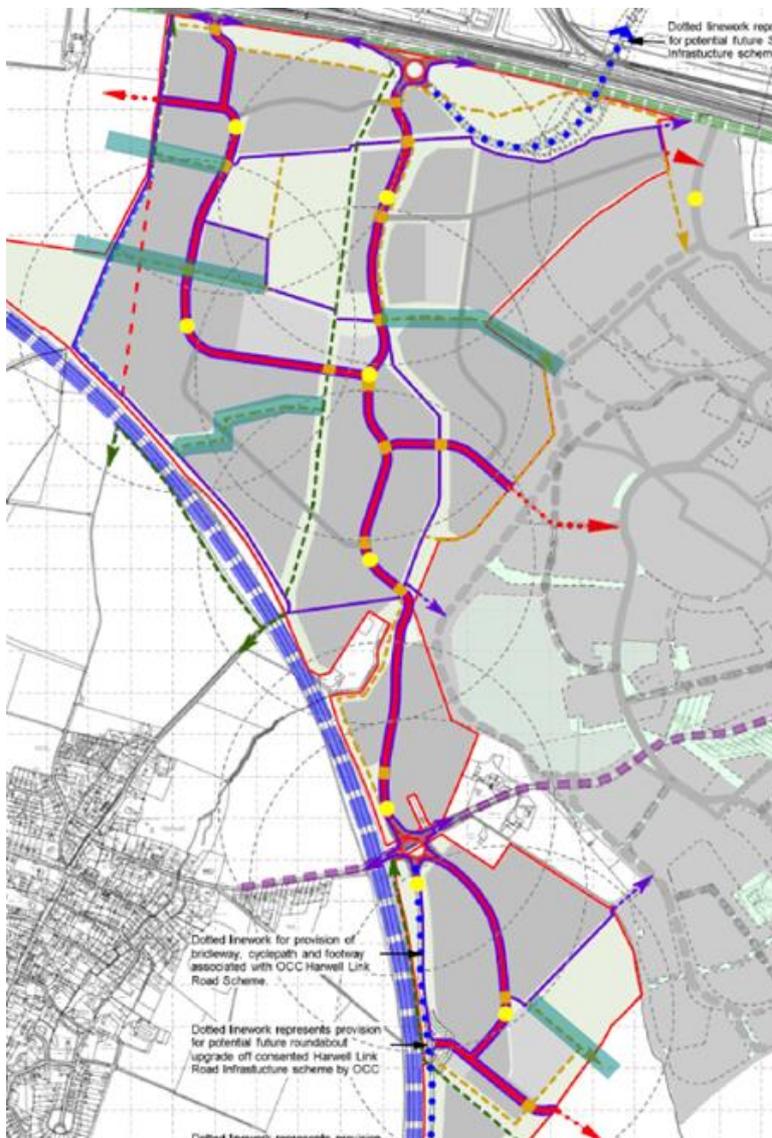
The final design should allow for the B4493 to be a strategic cycling route in line with the County's Science Vale Cycling Strategy. Drawing number 10219-HL-61 shall be amended to show controlled pedestrian crossing point on Southern Access Arm.

#### Off-carriageway cycle paths

In general there are good off-road cycle links shown complementing the road network. When it comes to detailed design it is important both are integrated properly and not considered two separate stand-alone networks. For busier off-road paths, the aim should be for segregation, for quieter routes in terms of footfall and cyclists, shared-use is appropriate.

The route of the path from the Cow Lane A34 crossing to a point suitable for access into Great Western Park is as previously requested and should enable a good direct route from Didcot through Great Western Park and Valley Park and on to Harwell.

Some paths are shown on the movement plan as being footpaths only. In general, these routes should be available for cyclists as well unless there is a parallel or more convenient alternative and, in reality, cyclists will use them anyway. It is particularly important that all footpaths into Great Western Park, North West Valley Park and Cow Lane are available for cyclists (turquoise highlights on map below).



With regard to detailed design specification and highway adoption it is recommended the applicant continues discussion with the County Council's Road Agreements Team. The following informal comments are provided in response to the illustrative submission:

All driveways onto the spine road will need a 2.4 x 24 vision splay.

Behind all road kerbs we require a minimum 800mm maintenance margin, these are to allow us to maintain the kerbs and house street lights. (not required behind footways).

Trees within Highway will incur a commuted sum, adequate tree pits and root barriers must be used and tree species will need to be agreed at a later point.

We require a substantial demarcation between the cycle lane and the carriageway to prevent parking/overrun onto the cycle lane, however access to the cycle lane is still required for road sweeping and general maintenance.

Parallel parking bays to be a minimum 2.5m wide, buffer zone required also to prevent doors from cars being opened into oncoming cyclists.

Flush textured surface panels are not to be audible but we are happy with the design in principle for flush panels.

Tracking drawings required throughout.

Provide all buses stops on carriageway.

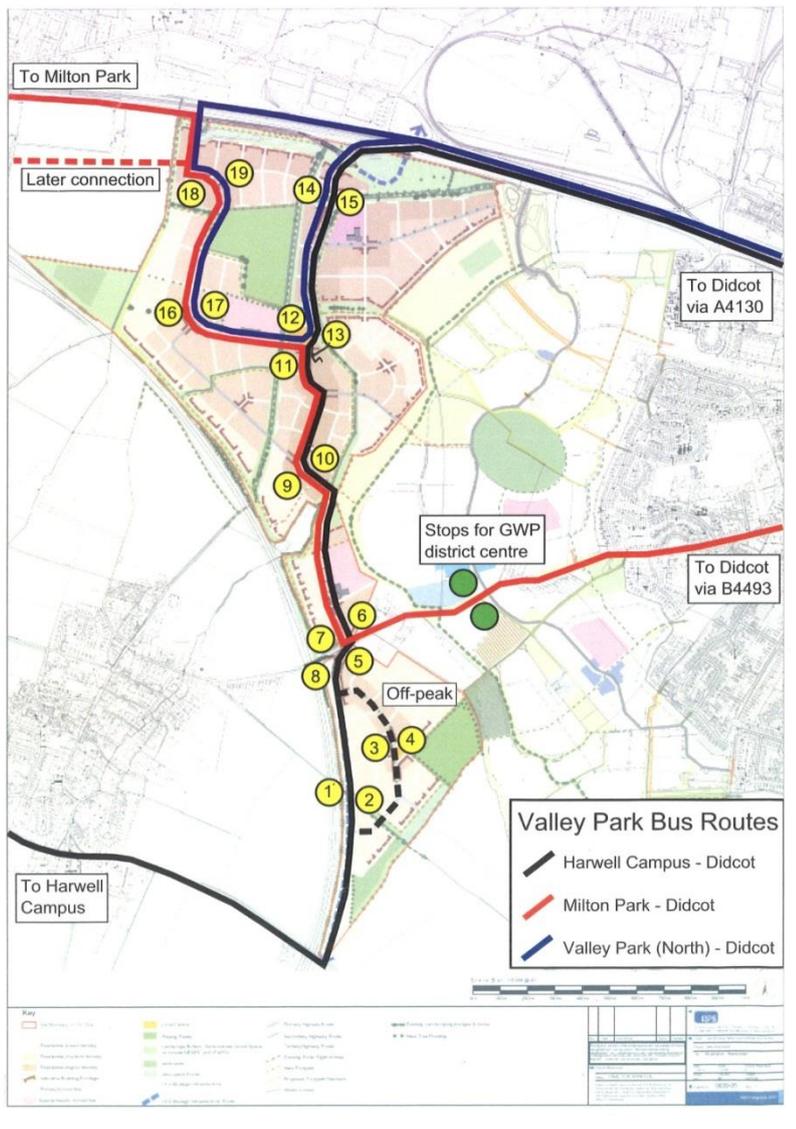
Increase length of 0.9m overrun strip around start and end of the access boulevard.

Highway structures are required (culverts) and as such the developers attention is drawn to informative note D above.

## **Public Transport**

There is recognition in the Vision contained in the Design and Access Statement of the intention to make the development attractive for long term viable bus routes as follows: 'Public transport will help to create a sustainable, connected and accessible neighbourhood, with extensive opportunities for public transport operators to run viable bus routes through the site. The main internal strategic route has provision for a high frequency bus route running between the A4130 and A417, and will utilise the proposed Harwell Strategic Link Road through the south of the site. Equally important is the provision of opportunities for east-west movement between Great Western Park/Didcot town and North West Valley Park. The highest density development will be along the bus routes, ensuring the largest number of people can access these services, and also assisting with their viability.'

There is some inconsistency later with some drawings (e.g. the Proposed Bus Connections Plan) not showing a bus route through the Harwell Link Road. We consider that utilisation of the spine road and the HLR will ensure the most direct and fastest bus route between Didcot and Harwell Campus and therefore envisage its use. The following is a map of possible bus routes advised in our May 2015 comment:



The alignment and design of the spine road is of fundamental importance to the delivery of bus services to this large development. The proposal for a 6.75m wide carriageway for the spine road, widened on bends to accommodate buses, should be sufficient to cater for this bus route. It is absolutely essential that buses can proceed along the spine road at a reasonable speed, as appropriate for an ‘inter-urban’ bus service. The location of Valley Park, between Harwell Campus and Didcot, means that designers must create a road suitable for inter-urban bus operation. An attractive route for bus operation will eventually result in more buses being operated on a commercial basis, probably offering residents with direct connection to Oxford, for example.

At Reserved Matters stages, or in the proposed Design Code, it is expected that the needs of schools will be further considered, so parental cars do not impede the flow of buses. The locations of bus stops can also be formalised at these later stages.

Bus services must become commercially viable after a period of pump-priming financial support. Bus services will only become commercially viable if they are attractive to future residents, or to people travelling to this site. The fundamentals of an attractive bus service include directness (as perceived), frequency, comfort and reasonable fares.

Considerable financial support will be required to pump-prime the initial bus services to and from this development. It is currently envisaged that five additional vehicles will be required in

the local bus network, and these require pump-priming towards commercial viability at an estimated cost to the developer of £3.6 million [2015 prices]. The developer is required to procure these bus services to an agreed specification as will be set out in the Section 106 Agreement, prior to the release of any planning permission.

A detailed bus service specification will require agreement, given uncertainties over speed of housing delivery, uncertainty over availability of dates of opening of the spine road and HLR, and indeed, inherent uncertainty over delivery of other infrastructure schemes in the Science Vale area.

Bus shelters will be required for the bus stops. The shelters themselves can be procured directly by the developer but real-time information display units and the poles and flags must be sourced through the County Council. The developer should confirm with Harwell Parish Council regarding future maintenance arrangements for bus shelters. Given the size of the development, the promoter may wish to consider an advertising-shelter arrangement, which would ensure maintenance and cleaning of the shelters at no cost to the developer or Parish Council. The number of bus stops will be identified in the detailed design. Some 18 new bus stops are envisaged in the diagram above and the estimated cost for shelters and stop units (poles with flags) at all of these stops is some £183,000. Real-time information displays at 3 stops works out to an additional £15,000 or £5,000 per stop. The total in this scenario is therefore estimated to be in the order of £198,000 or £11,000 per stop and includes a commuted maintenance sum.

The work done to prepare vignettes at this stage to indicate the likely design of the spine road and the east-west main street is appreciated. In respect of bus services it is noted that ramps may not be appropriate if they serve to delay buses or make the bus ride uncomfortable but it is accepted that the vignettes say that this is to be agreed with the County Council. There is also a concern that direct access to on-curtilage car parking may inappropriately interfere with the bus route, and therefore this should be minimised.

### **Public Rights of Way**

No changes to any public right of way direction, width, surface, signing or structures shall be made without appropriate legal procedure, including prior consultation. The footpaths and bridleways that cross the site must be accommodated appropriately, especially the bridleway which requires equestrians and other users to be able to pass safely.

The development will affect existing Rights of Way on the site and in the surrounding area due to the amount and frequency of increased use and the impacts of increased vehicular traffic. Public rights of way through the site should be integrated with the development and improved to meet the pressures caused by the development whilst retaining their character where appropriate. The number of vehicular access roads that cut across the public rights of way should be limited and controlled crossings should be provided on any internal road which cut across public rights of way where necessary.

Routes within the site should be easy to use and the area should be permeable for walkers and cyclists to maximise journeys without cars. This could include upgrading some of the Great Western Park routes that provide onward connections so that more users are able to benefit. There needs to be a strategic network out and through the site for equestrian users, especially for routes linking to the Driftway. The network of routes inside the development do not have to be public rights of way – they could just be tracks designated and maintained as part of permanent public open space provision.

Financial contributions and derived improvements would be focused on PRoW measures for walkers, cyclists and equestrians, not used for commuting or transport measures, as PRoW are generally lower cost and lower spec. Contributions include a period of bedding in and future maintenance. £250,000 is sought for off-site access mitigation measures to public rights of way, to fund surface, drainage, furniture and other public rights of way access infrastructure; on connecting routes and key countryside access assets including the Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails.

The following comments are provided in response to the illustrative submission:-

#### Cow Lane

Cow Lane needs integrating with the development as a green route with good passive surveillance. It will need lighting.

#### The Driftway

The Driftway also needs integrating with the development and may need lighting. Any road crossings need to have appropriate controlled crossing facility (e.g. a Pegasus crossing) and be kept to a minimum in order to preserve the route's integrity. The development should provide the additional financial means to enable provision for any altered route of the Driftway when the HLR is constructed. This may include crossing points, surfaces and linking routes etc.

### **Travel Plan**

The location of the Valley Park site next to GWP is a considerable distance from some of the facilities that residents will need to access in Didcot. Good links for all modes of travel will be key to making the development as permeable as possible. The Framework Master Travel Plan should include details of how the site will link with the existing walking and cycling networks as well as any new provision that will be created. The plan should include a masterplan showing walking and cycling links across the development along with details of sustainable travel initiatives such as car clubs, electric car charging points, bus routes and forthcoming improvements, cycle parking locations and bike purchase schemes.

The Framework Master Travel Plan will need to be submitted and approved by the Travel Plan Team at Oxfordshire County Council before first occupation. A travel information pack will also need to be developed for every dwelling. This will also be submitted for approval by the Travel Plan Team before first occupation.

The Oxfordshire County Council Guidance document, *Transport for New Developments: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans* (March 2014) sets out travel plan requirements. Travel plan monitoring fees of £7,800 are required for the Framework Master Travel Plan which will act as an umbrella travel plan for the whole site. In addition to this, additional travel plans / travel plan statements and associated monitoring fees will be required for any of the other elements that make up the proposed development and are over the travel plan thresholds. Further monitoring fees may be required to cater for extended monitoring over a long period given the scale of this development.

## **Drainage**

Before the commencement of the development, a fully designed scheme utilising a sustainable drainage system for the surface water drainage of the development must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and once approved the scheme must be implemented prior to the occupation of any dwelling to which the scheme relates. This is to ensure the effective and sustainable drainage of the site and to avoid flooding.

**Officer's Name: Geoffrey Arnold**

**Officer's Title:** Principal Engineer

**Date:** 05 April 2016

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**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## **Archaeology**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection subject to conditions

### **Key issues:**

The applicant has undertaken the archaeological evaluation that we requested and we are now in receipt of a brief interim report of the results.

The evaluation targeted the anomalies identified by a geophysical survey. Three definite archaeological sites have been identified within an extensive agricultural field system.

We would recommend that should consent be granted that conditions are attached that will require a staged programme of archaeological investigation and recording in advance of development.

### **Legal agreement required to secure:**

None

### **Conditions:**

1. Prior to any demolition and the commencement of the development a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the Local Planning Authority shall prepare an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, relating to the application site area, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with the NPPF (2012)

2. Following the approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition 1, and prior to any demolition on the site and the commencement of the development (other than in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation), a staged programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason – To safeguard the identification, recording, analysis and archiving of heritage assets before they are lost and to advance understanding of the heritage assets in their wider context through publication and dissemination of the evidence in accordance with the NPPF (2012).

**Informatives:**

None

**Detailed comments:**

The applicant has undertaken the archaeological evaluation that we requested and we are now in receipt of a brief interim report of the results.

The archaeological evaluation has targeted anomalies that were identified by a geophysical survey of the application area. Three archaeological sites were identified. A substantial polygonal double ditched enclosure was revealed. Within this was a ring ditch, circular enclosures, postholes and pits. The dating suggests a relatively long period of occupation and activity from the Later Bronze Age to the second century AD.

Two Romano British sites were also revealed. One appears to be a small settlement site that includes ditches, pits and post holes within a boundary ditch. The presence of tile confirms structures were present. The site appears to be predominantly of first and second century date. A second Romano British site was also identified. This comprised of a rectangular enclosure with internal features and external ditches. A second possible enclosure was also found. These appear to date from the second to the fourth centuries AD.

Trenching was also undertaken across the entire application area. A large proportion of the trenches revealed linear ditches predominantly on north-east/south-west and north-west/southeast alignments. Most of them contain Roman pottery and appear to form part of an extensive field system supporting small settlements of farmsteads.

Some trenching within the current application area was undertaken as part of the previous Great Western Park evaluation phase. This revealed some archaeological features, including ring ditches. No further trenching of was undertaken but further investigation of them will form part of the overall mitigation for this development.

We would, therefore, recommend that, should planning permission be granted, the applicant should be responsible for ensuring the implementation of a staged programme of archaeological investigation to be undertaken in advance of development. This can be ensured through the attachment of suitable negative conditions.

**Officer's Name: Hugh Coddington**

**Officer's Title: Archaeology Team Leader**

**Date: 15 March 2016**

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**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## **Economy and Skills**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection subject to conditions

### **Key issues:**

- The construction of the proposed development will create a significant number of new construction jobs
- The level of employment generated on this strategic development site will require the developers to prepare and implement a Community Employment Plan (CEP)

### **Conditions:**

- The developers will be required to prepare and implement, with local agencies and providers, an Ema Community Employment Plan that will ensure, as far as possible, that local people have access to training (including apprenticeships) and employment opportunities available at the construction phase of this proposed development.

### **Detailed Comments:**

Recent policy initiatives relating to skills development are contained in:

- The Oxfordshire City Deal
- Oxfordshire European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) Strategy
- Strategic Economic Plan

The recently launched **Oxfordshire Skills Strategy** has five strategic priorities:

- SP1: To meet the needs of local employers through a more integrated and responsive approach to education and training: developed in partnership with our provider network, to encourage more training provision in priority sectors - both current and projected - to meet the needs of employers or to train future entrepreneurs, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

- SP2: Creating the 'skills continuum' to support young people through their learning journey: the ambition is to develop integrated, seamless services that support young people through school and on into training, further education, employment or business, where they understand the full breadth of career options, including local demand, and the training path to succeed in that career.
- SP3: Up-skilling and improving the chances of young people and adults marginalised or disadvantaged from work, based on moving them closer to the labour market.
- SP4: To increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities, particularly those offered by small to medium sized businesses.
- SP5: To explore how we can better retain graduates within Oxfordshire to meet the demand for the higher level skills our businesses need.

### **Employment and skills planning justification**

A better, appropriately skilled local workforce can provide a pool of talent to both developers and end occupiers. This will reduce the need to import skills, and in doing so reduce congestion and unsustainable travel to work modes, reduce carbon emissions and the pressure on the local housing infrastructure.

Seeking skills and training planning obligations or conditions to maximise the potential of the existing population to compete for the jobs being created, whether during the construction phase or end user phase, through improving their skills levels, is necessary to ensure that future development is economically and socially sustainable, and that barriers to employment for those marginalised from the workforce are removed.

Developers often identify projected training and employment outcomes as part of the justification for development. It is important therefore that the impacts of economic development are mitigated and the economic benefits of new development in terms of improved local skills and employment outcomes are realised.

Not only is it clear that skills levels are a key determinant of a sustainable local economy, but they also have an impact on employment opportunities and thus an individual's economic prosperity. Up-skilling the area's labour force will be key to maintaining economic competitiveness.. Securing obligations for skills development and employment of local people will be necessary to enhance social inclusion by reducing the potential for economic and social disparity, another key policy driver at the local level.

**Officer's Name: Dawn Pettis**

**Officer's Title: Economic Development Strategy Manager**

**Date: 29 March 2016**

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**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## **Education**

The County Council (OCC) has previously commented (Single Response to P14/V2873/O – see Barbara Chillman’s Education element dated the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and P14/V2873/O-2 see Barbara Chillman’s Education element dated the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015) on the infrastructure required to mitigate the impact of the development on education provision. The comments in OCC’s previous responses stand save as amended herein. The purpose of this response is to provide updated contributions figures in respect of education provision and to comment on the provision of 1.6 ha of land for SEN use.

### **Further comment on primary provision**

In OCC’s previous responses the cost of a 2 form of entry (2FE) school including a pre-school provision was stated as £8,068,000 on the basis of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2012 (3Q12) values. (£9,494,387 3Q15). Subsequent to previous responses OCC has agreed with VoWH that specific cost per pupil rates (Interim Cost Rates) are to be used for assessment of contributions to New-build schools. The Interim Cost Rates do not reflect the actual full costs of provision but until further notice will be applied in relation to residential development proposals within Vale of White Horse District and South Oxfordshire District by the County. The agreed Interim Cost Rate for primary provision is £20,000 per pupil place as at 3Q15 values.

The primary schools required to mitigate the impact of the proposed development will be two, 420 place (pupils aged 4/5 years of age to 10/11 years inclusive) primary schools with a 68 place early years provision; in total 488 pupil places. Therefore the contribution, as currently assessed, would be 488 places at £20,000 per place being £9,760,000 as at 3Q15 values.

However, OCC has commissioned independent cost consultants to cost a 2FE primary school with early years provision. Current indications from their work show that less than £9,760,000 (3Q15) would be required and that £9,494,387 (3Q15) would be an appropriate amount for the cost of each school. The total contribution therefore required to deliver two 2FE primary schools with early years provision is £18,988,774 (3Q15).

In addition prior to the opening of the first and / or the second primary schools temporary provision will need to be addressed either by provision at the site or elsewhere and if elsewhere transportation will be required.

### **Further comments on secondary provision**

As stated above, OCC has agreed interim costs per pupil place. The agreed Interim Cost Rate for new build secondary provision is £21,000 per pupil place as at 3Q15 values.

It is estimated that a development of 4,254 dwellings is likely to generate 714 secondary pupils. On this basis the secondary contribution would be £14,994,000 at 3Q15 values.

Because the proposed development is in outline form a matrix provision would be appropriate in any S106 to ensure the appropriate contribution is calculated in line with expected pupil impacts.

### **Further comments on SEN provision**

The agreed Interim Cost Rate per place for new build SEN provisions is £72,500 as at 3Q15 values. It is estimated that 17 pupils will be generated by the development that will require SEN provision. The s106 contribution required towards expanding SEN provision is therefore £1,232,500 as at 3Q15 values. Again a matrix provision would be required to address the outline nature of the development proposal. Further, if a revised SEN school expansion cost is agreed prior to this application's final report to committee OCC would seek to amend the contribution sought to in line with the agreed costs per place.

OCC has requested a serviced school site of 1.6 ha suitable for SEN school use be provided (freehold and free of charge) at the development, to OCC, to enable the new facility to be delivered. A site of 1.6 ha would enable a 100 place SEN school to be accommodated. The County Council recognises that the 17 SEN pupils estimated to be generated by the proposed development itself (based on the assumed mix of dwellings) would not justify provision of a 100 SEN school. BB104 provides space standards for SEN provision and applying a mid-range between the minimum and maximum range stated in BB104, 1.401 ha would be required for a 17 pupil SEN provision. Consequently 1.401 ha of land, sufficient for a 17 place SEN provision, is required to be transferred to OCC at no cost to OCC. With regard to the residual 0.199 ha, based on agreed school expansion land values at other Oxfordshire development sites an appropriate value is £150,000 per acre being £73,650 (3Q15) for the 0.199 ha (0.491 acres).

**Officer's Name: Judith Coats**

**Officer's Title: Principal Infrastructure Funding Officer**

**Date: 05 April 2016**

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**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## Property

The County Council (OCC) has previously commented on Property matters (Single Response to P14/V2873/O – see Oliver Spratley’s Property element dated the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and P14/V2873/O-2 see Oliver Spratley’s Property element dated the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015). The comments in OCC’s previous responses stand save as amended herein. The purpose of this response is to provide updated contributions figures.

The following housing mix has been used to estimate the likely population generated by the development:

570 x One Bed Dwellings  
1123 x Two Bed Dwellings  
1678 x Three Bed Dwellings  
883 x Four Bed Dwellings  
35% affordable housing buildout over 20 years

Based on the above mix it is calculated that this development would generate a net increase of:

9685 additional residents including:  
1204 resident/s aged 65+  
7140 residents aged 20+  
934 resident/s ages 13-19  
517 resident/s ages 0-4

The following contributions are based on the above population generation. Because the proposed development is in outline form a matrix provision would be appropriate in any s106 to ensure the appropriate contribution is calculated in line with expected population impact.

### **Local Library**

The costs of extending a library is £2,836 per m<sup>2</sup> at 3rd Quarter 2015 price base; this equates to £78 (£2,836 x 27.5 / 1,000) per resident.

This calculation is based on Oxfordshire County Council adopted standard for publicly available library floor space of 23 m<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 head of population, and a further 19.5% space is required for support areas (staff workroom, etc.), totaling 27.5 m<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 head of population.

The development proposal would also generate the need to increase the core book stock held by 2 volumes per additional resident. The price per volume is £10.00; this equates to

£20 per resident.

- The contribution for the provision of local library infrastructure and supplementary core book stock in respect of this application would therefore be based on the following formula:

$$\mathbf{\pounds 98 \times 9685 \text{ (the forecast number of new residents)} = \pounds 949,130 \text{ at 3rd Quarter 2015 values}}$$

### **Central Library**

Central Library in Oxford serves the whole county and requires remodelling to support service delivery that includes provision of library resources across the county.

Remodelling of the library at 3rd Quarter 2015 base prices leaves a funding requirement still to be secured is £4,620,635. 60% of this funding is collected from development in the Oxford area. The remainder 40% is spread across the four other Districts. 40% of £4,620,635 = £1,848,254

Population across Oxfordshire outside of Oxford City District is forecast to grow by 93,529 to year 2026. £1,848,254 ÷ 93,529 people = £19.77 per person

- The contribution for the provision of central library infrastructure in respect of this application would therefore be based on the following formula:

$$\mathbf{\pounds 19.77 \times 9685 \text{ (the forecast number of new residents)} = \pounds 191,473 \text{ 3rd Quarter 2015 values}}$$

### **Strategic Waste Management**

As consultations on how unmet demand and future demand on waste management facilities can be mitigated have not been concluded OCC is currently not seeking a contribution towards expanding waste management facilities in Vale of White Horse.

### **Social and Health Care – Day Care Facilities**

Contributions are based upon a new Day Care centre offering 40 places per day (optimum) and open 5 days per week; leading to an equivalent costing of £13,163 per place at 3rd Quarter 2015 price base (this in non-revenue). Based on current and predicted usage figures we estimate that 1% of the over 65 population use day care facilities. Therefore the cost per person aged 65 years or older is £131.63.

- The contribution for the provision of adult day care infrastructure in respect of this application would therefore be based on the following formula:

$$\mathbf{\pounds 131.63 \times 1204 \text{ (the forecast number of new residents aged 65+)} = \pounds 158,483 \text{ 3rd Quarter 2015 values.}}$$

OCC is investigating the feasibility of a new Health and Wellbeing Centre in Didcot being located on the Great Western Park site as part of its ECH development. If this does not prove feasible OCC would explore the feasibility of the Health and Wellbeing Centre being provided on the Valley Park site as part of its ECH development.

**Extra Care Housing**

A 70 unit extra care housing scheme is required. All dwellings to be affordable housing with a tenure split: maximum 75% affordable rent and minimum 25% shared ownership.

**Officer's Name:** Judith Coats

**Officer's Title:** Principal Infrastructure Funding Officer

**Date:** 05 April 2016

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**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## Ecology

### Recommendation:

No objection subject to conditions and contributions

### Key issues:

As I explained in my objection to application P14/V2873/O-2 on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015, the application shows land within the application site reserved for the route of the new Science Bridge. The area that would be affected by the Science Bridge contains valuable habitats. I remain concerned about the ecological impacts of the proposed Science Bridge layout because the scheme would be likely to result in the loss of UK Priority Habitat unimproved grassland and harm to the potential ecological corridor function of the stream if it is culverted. Whilst the Science Bridge scheme does not form part of the current Valley Park application, access to the development from the A4130 and the double roundabouts are part of the current application and the Science Bridge is integral to the Valley Park proposal.

### Grassland

The proposed location of the site access does not impinge on the area of UK Priority Habitat of unimproved grassland. However, the grassland may be negatively impacted by increased recreational pressure and changes in management and drainage as a result of the development.

In addition, it is likely that the unimproved grassland will in future be detrimentally affected by Science Bridge, a scheme which is integral to the Valley Park proposal.

If it is considered that the importance of the Science Bridge scheme clearly outweighs the ecological harm then a contribution towards biodiversity offsetting should be made, as compensation for the loss of the unimproved grassland and other habitats. The cost of the biodiversity offsetting is currently estimated at approximately £400,000 - £550,000. A reasonable proportion of this to attribute to this development is £150,000, the remainder to be factored as a cost of the Science Bridge/site access elements. This is considered to meet the tests of reasonableness in that it is necessary to make the development acceptable; is directly related to the development; and as it is only a proportion of the cost it is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind.

Even with the loss of the unimproved grassland, suitable management for nature conservation should be required and public access may need to be restricted in this area. An appropriate condition and legal agreement for long-term management in this area is a matter for the District Council to consider.

### Watercourses

The potential detrimental impacts of the Valley Park development on watercourses and habitats along their corridors (e.g. trees with bat roost, foraging and commuting potential) has been increased by the requirement for more crossing points associated with accommodating the potential future design of the Science Bridge. The actual design of the crossings will influence the future ecological functioning of the watercourses. I recommend that the District Council ensures that detailed designs of each crossing point of the streams minimise the ecological impacts. The revised EIA (S5.28 of SEI Vol1 Chapter 5) states “The sympathetic design of the bridge and culverts, including appropriate wildlife ledges and open span designs will minimise any potential impacts [on Water Voles]”. The design of the crossings should allow as wide a corridor for each stream as possible and incorporate wildlife ledges. Wide span bridges should be used instead of culverts wherever possible.

### Conditions:

District Council to provide suitable conditions in relation to ecology. Unless the following is submitted prior to determination, details required by conditions should include:

- detailed designs of crossings of the streams that minimise the ecological impact and incorporate wildlife ledges; and
- details of the management of habitats on site and how recreational impact on valuable habitats would be minimised; and
- details of the proposed mitigation and compensation for the loss of trees along the stream corridor and impact on bats, to avoid severing commuting corridors by crossing points.

### Informatives:

District Council to provide suitable informatives in relation to ecology.

### Detailed comments:

#### Public Open Space

- I understand that the stream corridor and Meadows Park does not count towards the Public Open Space requirement. This is appropriate, as these areas should be primarily managed for nature conservation and the watercourse be provided with buffer that is undisturbed on at least one side to support its function as an ecological corridor. However, the Design & Access Statement says that public access of Meadows Park will be promoted, so this will need to be managed carefully to ensure that the most ecologically sensitive habitats are not damaged, which may require restricted access to some parts of this area.

#### Residential Development

- As mentioned in my previous comments, in relation to the residential development and associated infrastructure, the District Council should be seeking the advice of their in-house ecologist who can advise them on this application, particularly

regarding buffer zones to retained ecological features (such as hedgerows, trees and watercourses) in that part of the site.

- In addition, the following guidance document on Biodiversity & Planning in Oxfordshire combines planning policy with information about wildlife sites, habitats and species to help identify where biodiversity should be protected. The guidance also gives advice on opportunities for enhancing biodiversity:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/planning-and-biodiversity>

**Officer's Name: Tamsin Atley**

**Officer's Title:** Ecologist Planner

**Date:** 05 April 2016

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**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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## **Fire Service**

### **Recommendation:**

No objection

### **Detailed comments:**

#### **Access for Firefighting:**

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (OFRS) assumes that access to the proposed sites and to the premises will be in accordance with the guidance in the current edition of Approved Document B to the Building Regulations volumes 1 & 2.

#### **Water Supplies for Fire fighting:**

We strongly recommend the provision of adequate and appropriate water supplies (fire hydrants) in accordance with the guidance in the current edition of Approved Document B to the Building Regulations volumes 1 & 2. we would also recommend that the development conforms to British Standards BS 9999:2008 (Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings – Section 23 Water supplies for fire and rescue service use - 23.2 Location and access to external water supply) & BS 9990 (Code of practice for non-automatic fire-fighting systems in buildings – Section 5, Private fire hydrants - 5.2 Provision and Siting)

#### **Automatic Water Suppression Systems:**

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service also believe that fitting of Automatic Water Suppression Systems (AWSS) will materially assist in the protection of life, property and fire fighter safety. AWSS such as sprinklers and water mist systems do save lives; therefore OFRS strongly recommend the provision of such systems particularly in new build properties for the proposed sites.

**Officer's Name:** Mat Carlile

**Officer's Title:** Area Manager

**Date:** 30 September 2015

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## RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

**District:** Vale of White Horse

**Application no:** P14/V2873/O-3

**Proposal:** Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 4,254 dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.(as amended by drawings and information accompanying letter from Agent dated 10 March 2016)

**Location:** Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

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### LOCAL MEMBER VIEWS

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**Cllr: Nick Hards**

**Division: Didcot West**

**Comments:**

On p4 of the Design & Access Statement (D&A) the applicant talks about being self confident and locating homes next to the A4130. This approach is wrong. Valley Park is an edge of town site and should not be brash and intrusive. Good planning involves reducing the density towards the edge of a settlement, not increasing it.

The Transport and Movement section (p12 of the D&A) refers to the A34 and the A4130. Both these roads already operate at seriously over capacity during peak periods and building 4254 homes on this site would seriously impact on the road network. The number of homes proposed would render this site wholly unsustainable and would also interfere with the free movement of traffic from the other current and proposed developments in the area. P13 fails to acknowledge that this application is a major reason for the need to increase the highway capacity (Science Bridge and Harwell Link Road). At 4254 homes, Valley Park would make exacerbate the overcrowding on the existing road network.

Page 11 of the Design and Access Statement refers to Didcot Hospital and Woodlands Medical Centre. Although those premises are near to Valley Park they are also seriously overcrowded. The applicant must make new health provision for the homes which he wishes to build on this site.

I dispute the conclusions on p18 regarding the flood risk on this site. The planned development will introduce new hard surfaces and therefore increase the run off however good the SUDs are. The valley which gives the site its name will collect this run off and the blue areas on the EA Flood Map will still be at risk of flooding and probably to a greater extent. I would urge the Planning Authority to make sure the Applicant's calculations are independently verified.

The building height parameters plan proposes up to 4 "landmark" buildings which may be up to 15m high. This is totally inappropriate for an edge of town location which is far from the facilities and amenities of Didcot. The proposed northern access to the site is over 3 km as the crow flies from Didcot Station and even further from the main shopping centre.

**Date:** 23 March 2016

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