

APPLICATION NO.	P16/V1766/RM
SITE	Land to the West of Didcot Power Station, Sutton Courtenay Lane, Sutton Courtenay, Abingdon, OX14 4BW
PARISH	SUTTON COURTENAY
PROPOSAL	Consent sought for landscaping as a reserved matter following grant of outline permission under reference P14/V1906/O (Proposed redevelopment of existing buildings and land to provide new buildings for storage and distribution (Use Class B8) and ancillary facilities, car and lorry parking, service areas, access and landscaping) (As clarified by Tree Pit drawing 5182 ASP2.0 received 24 August 2016 and further amended by Landscaping Drawings ASP 1.1 Rev N - 1.14 Rev N, ASP 2.0 and Issue IV of the Habitat Management Plan accompanying agent's email of 11 October 2016 and subsequently clarified further by Drainage Plan C11238 210 P9 Drainage Layout accompanying agent's email of 18 November 2016)
WARD MEMBER	Gervase Duffield
APPLICANT	Diageo Pension Trust Ltd
OFFICER	Peter Brampton

RECOMMENDATION

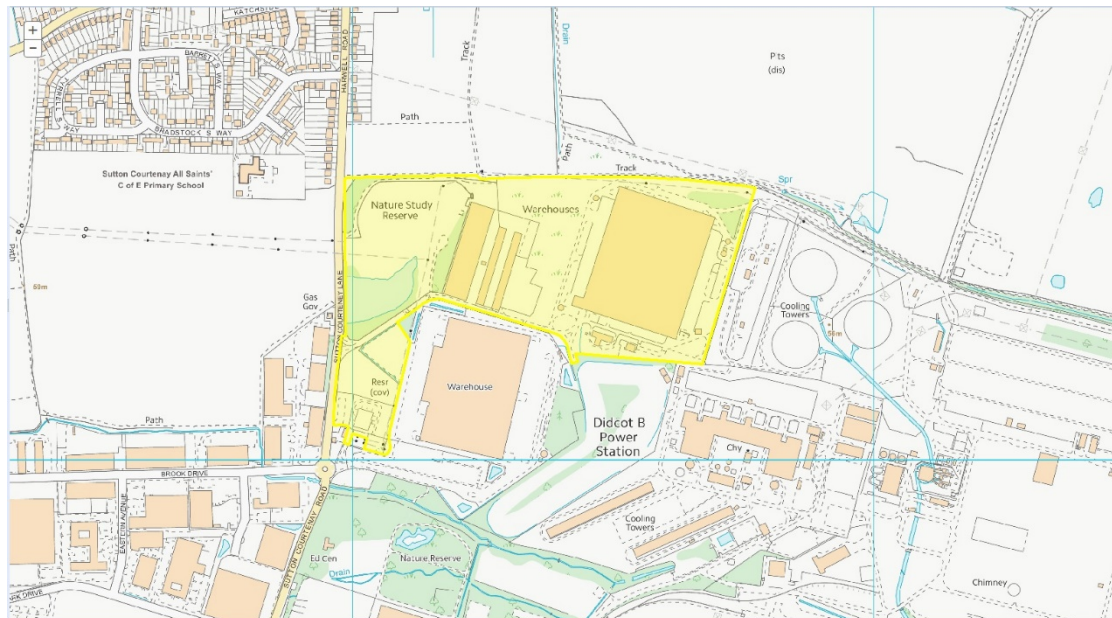
To grant reserved matters approval subject to:

- 1. Commencement two years.**
- 2. Approved plans.**
- 3. Implementation of landscaping and maintenance as approved.**
- 4. Habitat creation and restoration plan as approved.**

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1** This application is referred to planning committee because it constitutes a “large-scale” major application as it relates to a commercial development over 2 hectares in size.
- 1.2** This application relates to a site totalling just over 25 hectares, located on the eastern side of Sutton Courtenay road, for where the site is accessed. The site is located behind Didcot B Power Station but is more associated with Milton Park.
- 1.3** Sutton Courtenay lies to the north and northeast of the site. There is a current application for housing between this site and housing on the eastern side of

Sutton Courtenay Road (Application Ref; P16/V0646/O). Existing housing lies immediately opposite the northwestern corner of the site, whilst All Saint’s Primary school lies around 150 metres away to the west. To the south of the site lies an existing ASDA warehouse. A location plan is provided below for reference:



- 1.5 The site contains buildings used for B8 storage and distribution purposes that are now largely vacant. Policy E10 of the Local Plan 2011 covers much of the site, identifying it as a strategic employment site.
- 1.6 In July 2015, the council granted outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the site for two B8 storage and distribution warehouse buildings that would operate 24 hours a day. Full consent was granted for the means of access, appearance, layout and scale. This application seeks approval for the one outstanding reserved matter, which is landscape.
- 1.7 The landscape proposals are based on the aims of the landscape masterplan that formed part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) submitted in support of the outline application. This application also includes a Habitat Creation and Restoration Plan which is necessary in response to condition 32 of the outline planning permission and provides an integrated approach to landscaping and habitat creation across the site.
- 1.8 Reduced examples of the detailed landscaping proposal plans are **attached** as Appendix One. Full scale versions of the plans and supporting documentation are available to view online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

2.1	Sutton Courtenay Parish Council	No objections <i>“Sutton Courtenay Parish Council wishes to ensure that the bund on the northern side is retained, and that the</i>
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	<i>landscaping is not altered...No information is given as to the construction method of the bund. This is required, particularly in view of the public footpath which runs alongside the northern boundary, which could be adversely affected by water runoff."</i>
Neighbours	One neighbour has objected to the original and amended scheme for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of detail of bunding • Badger sett on bunding is unworkable
Countryside Officer	No objection following submission of updated Habitat Creation and Restoration Plan
Natural England	No objections
Landscape Architect	No objections following submission of amended plans
Forestry Officer	No objections following submission of amended plans
Southern Gas Networks (SGN)	Standard advice note on works near to SGN assets provided. No specific comments on this application made.
National Grid	No objections
Oxfordshire County Council Highways	No objection following submission of amended plans showing SuDS attenuation ponds matching the storage capacity of those approved in respect of condition 24 approved under P15/V2038/DIS
Highways England	No objection

3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 [P15/V2038/DIS](#) - Approved (12/11/2015)

Discharge conditions 7 (drainage), 13 (drainage), 22 (drainage), 23 (surface water), 24 (drainage strategy), 26 (Unexploded ordnance desk study), 32 (habitat creation), 33 (mitigation strategy), 35 (Construction Environmental Management Plan) and 37 (arboricultural) of planning permission P14/V1906/O. Proposed redevelopment of existing buildings and land to provide new buildings for storage and distribution (Use Class B8) and ancillary facilities, car and lorry parking, service areas, access and landscaping (resubmission).

[P14/V1906/O](#) - Approved (16/07/2015)

Proposed redevelopment of existing buildings and land to provide new buildings for storage and distribution (Use Class B8) and ancillary facilities, car and lorry parking, service areas, access and landscaping (resubmission) (as amplified by additional Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) information received 13-10-14, and further amplified by Transport addendum

and LVIA addendum on 25-11-14).

3.2 **Pre-application History**

None

3.3 **Screening Opinion requests**

None

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 This proposal was screened for the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment under reference P12/V2185/SCR. It was concluded on 5 November 2012 that an EIA was not required.

5.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

5.1 **Landscaping**

A summary of the landscaping proposal is listed below:

- Broad buffer along northern and western edges
- Undulating bunds along northern and western boundaries using excess cut material from the site – no steeper than a 1:3 gradient
- Native tree and shrub planting to north and west to create a woodland edge, including evergreen species to provide year round mitigation
- Taller species such as lime and poplar to be planted, with semi-mature tree planting to offer mitigation from “Day One”
- Area of “open mosaic” habitat created to west of Unit B – a mix of grassland habitats including native wildflower and pollen rich species
- New ponds will also offer ecological enhancements

5.2 The site is designated in the adopted Local Plan (2011) as Lowland Vale (Policy NE9), where development that would have an adverse impact on the landscape is resisted, and as an area of landscape enhancement (Policy NE11), where proposals are expected to provide a landscaping scheme which enhances the appearance of the area. In assessing the landscape character of the area in respect of the outline proposal, the case officer noted, “*The gravel workings, landfill, pylons and Didcot Power station all have an impact on both the landscape character and visual appearance of the area and the proposed development must be seen within this setting with a number of existing detractors within the existing landscape.*” In assessing the outline application, the case officer noted that the proposal would not block any long, open views that are the defining characteristic of the Lowland Vale that Policy NE9 seeks to protect. The case officer was also of the view that sensitive mitigation could strengthen the structural planting along the more sensitive northern and western boundaries.

5.3 The LVIA accompanying the outline application proposed a seven-metre high undulating bund that, when combined with tree planting, would create a defining edge to the northern boundary of the site that would separate the industrial area from the surrounding rural landscape. This, combined with the setback of the larger warehouse of at least 50 metres from the boundary, was an important factor in officers’ assessment of the outline proposal. Similarly, the western boundary bunding and planting and the 140 metre distance between the building and the nearest houses on Sutton Courtenay Lane was

also important.

- 5.4 Consequently, the key point of assessment for this reserved matters application is whether the proposed bunding and planting along the northern and western boundary will achieve the visual mitigation that the original LVIA intended. Following the submission of amended plans following discussions between the applicant and the council's forestry officer and landscape architect, officers are satisfied that this proposal will follow through on the intentions of the outline scheme.
- 5.5 Following the queries raised by Sutton Courtenay Parish Council, officers have sought further details on the construction of the bund. The Parish Council were primarily concerned about surface water run-off onto the public footpath north of the site. Officers are also concerned about the visual impact of the bund, so its construction is an important aspect of the overall scheme. The intention is that the bund will be largely created from top soil from the site that will be reclaimed to allow construction of the buildings themselves. The bund will slope up and away from the site boundary at a gradient of no more than 1:3 to allow the proposed woodland planting to establish safely. Due to the land available, an element of engineering is required for the northern bund, as well as a safety barrier at its top (wire-mesh fencing). Given the additional space available, the western bund will have a shallower gradient and form the edge of a new grassland area.
- 5.6 This bunding was approved as part of the outline application, and cross-section plans submitted at outline stage have been provided at Appendix One. A "crib-lock" solution is proposed on the internal face of the bund, which is typical for this type of retaining wall. The bund would be constructed early in the build programme, with the planting on top undertaken towards the end in the appropriate seasons. This is controlled by conditions on the outline consent. In terms of drainage, a ditch at the foot of the slope will be provided within the site boundary to prevent water running onto the public footpath that runs to the immediate north of the site. This ditch will feed into the approved attenuation ponds as part of the overall drainage strategy.
- 5.7 Overall, officers are satisfied that the bunding can be safely achieved at a gradient that will allow the creation of the woodland. The risk of surface water run-off onto the adjacent footpath is minimal given the comprehensive drainage strategy for the site, whilst the gentle gradient of the bunding will allow for the comprehensive planting necessary to soften the appearance of the warehouse.
- 5.8 The proposed planting has been the subject of amendments following input from the council's landscape architect and forestry officer. Initially, the proposals included too many larger trees from the outset that would take longer to properly establish and offer the intended mitigation. At the request of officers, the applicant has altered this to bring in more small "feathered" and "whip" tree species that will grow quicker and offer greater variety to the woodland canopy. This woodland is supported by a range of shrubs to cover the areas below the canopies. Again, these aspects of the planting have been amended to suit the requirements of council officers to ensure an appropriate range of planting is offered.

- 5.9 Amended plans have also clarified the maintenance of the new trees, with particular reference to drought measures. This is particularly relevant to the planting on the bunds, as there is a lower availability of water on such engineered features. At the request of the forestry officer, a range of drought measures are now proposed, including increased watering and mulching, to officer satisfaction.
- 5.10 The amended plans also include a detailed maintenance strategy covering areas such as planting pit and trench preparation, the planting regime (locations, timings etc.), watering, the staking of larger trees to protect them during growing, root barriers and protection of existing vegetation. These are all important aspects for the overall success of the scheme and adherence to them will be secured through a condition.
- 5.11 Whilst the protection of the landscape to north and west has been the primary focus of the landscaping strategy throughout the outline and reserved matters stages, the applicant has also provided a planting and landscaping strategy for the internal environment of the site. This includes SuDS attenuation ponds and planting to soften the car park areas. The site will have a functional appearance, but these areas of additional planting will play an important role in improving the overall environment for staff and visitors.
- 5.12 Overall, the applicant has provided a comprehensive landscaping strategy that adheres to the accepted principles of the LVIA accompanying the outline application. Through the submission of amended plans, the applicant has improved the range of species being planted to ensure that the suggested woodland approach will establish quickly and offer the visual mitigation of the warehousing that was crucial to the original recommendation to approve this development. The applicant has also provided additional information relating to the on-going maintenance and protection of the trees to ensure that they will establish in the long-term. Officers are satisfied that the proposed landscaping scheme is acceptable.
- 5.13 **Biodiversity**
Condition 32 of the outline consent required the council's agreement of a habitat creation and restoration scheme. The existing habitats of the site will largely be lost to accommodate the new buildings. The landscaping and planting of the site has a key role in this new scheme and so the applicant has worked with the council to agree this as part of this reserved matters application.
- 5.14 The key aspects of the Creation and Restoration are summarised below:
- All plant species used for habitat creation to be native and sourced locally
 - Provide key habitats, particularly ponds for Great Crested Newts
 - Encourage colonisation through linking green infrastructure with the new ponds
 - Include fruit bearing species of trees to increase foraging for badgers (Apple, Crab apple, Wild plum and Pear trees).

- 5.15 To implement the scheme, two existing ponds that have supported Great Crested Newt habitats require removal. In discussions with Natural England, appropriate mitigation of 200% of existing capacity has been agreed. Accordingly, the applicant proposes ten new ponds across the site designed specifically for newts. Five other new ponds are necessary as part of the SuDS attenuation scheme. An existing pond will be retained as the receptor site for newts captured during the “capture programme” which is part of the agreed Newt Mitigation Strategy and will be subject to a European Protected Species licence from Natural England.
- 5.16 An artificial sett for badgers has already been provided on site as compensation for an existing sett that has been closed to allow the redevelopment of the site. Anecdotal evidence from locals suggests that this sett has not been used by the existing population of badgers. However, the applicant has secured the appropriate licence for closing the existing sett and the artificial sett is agreed as part of that licence to be appropriate mitigation. Furthermore, the provision of fruit trees attractive to badgers is an enhancement to the overall habitat offered by this site. Finally, as a rather unintended aside, the bunding itself, being on a gentle slope is likely to prove attractive to badgers for sett-building in the future. Overall, officers have no concerns over the approach to mitigating the effect of this proposal on the local badger population, particularly given the licence already granted.
- 5.17 As outlined above, the proposed planting is in part designed to provide the ecological enhancements required as part of the outline consent. This includes the provision of native trees that will allow for Newt shelter and hibernation and badger foraging as discussed. Nearly two hectares of grassland will also be created that will provide new populations of wild flowers and foraging opportunities for reptiles.
- 5.18 Finally, the development will provide bird and bat boxes across the site, although bird nesting within the woodland will likely be commonplace once it is established.
- 5.19 The overall habitat restoration and creation scheme is supported by a detailed five year management scheme to ensure that all mitigation is installed and maintained correctly to allow it to establish. This is required by condition 32 of the outline consent and has been agreed, following amendments, by the council’s countryside officer. There are no objections to the ecological impact of this proposal.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The landscaping proposals offer a comprehensive strategy for the site that adheres to the principles of the LVIA submitted in support of the outline planning application. The amendments to the application have further improved the scheme, particularly in terms of establishing the proposed woodland quickly to offer visual mitigation of the scheme from as early a stage as is practical.
- 6.2 The application also includes a comprehensive Habitat Creation and

Restoration Plan that will ensure the scheme provides an overall biodiversity enhancement as required by the NPPF. Subject to the recommended conditions, the application is recommended for approval.

The following planning policies have been taken into account:

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

- DC1 - Design
- DC6 - Landscaping
- DC12 - Water Quality and Resources
- DC13 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off
- DC14 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off
- NE9 - The Lowland Vale

Emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 policies;

- CP01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CP37 - Design and Local Distinctiveness
- CP38 - Design Strategies for Strategic and Major Development Sites
- CP44 - Landscape
- CP45 - Green Infrastructure
- CP46 - Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DESIGN GUIDE 2015

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

EQUALITY ACT 2010

SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ACT 2006

THE CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES REGULATIONS 2010

LOCALISM ACT

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998

EQUALITY ACT 2010 (SECTION 149)

Case Officer – Peter Brampton, Major Applications Officer

Email - peter.brampton@southandvale.gov.uk

Tel - 01235 422600