

ITEM NO. 5

COMMITTEE DATE: 24/06/2013

APPLICATION NO: 13/3089/26

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL
CONSULTATION

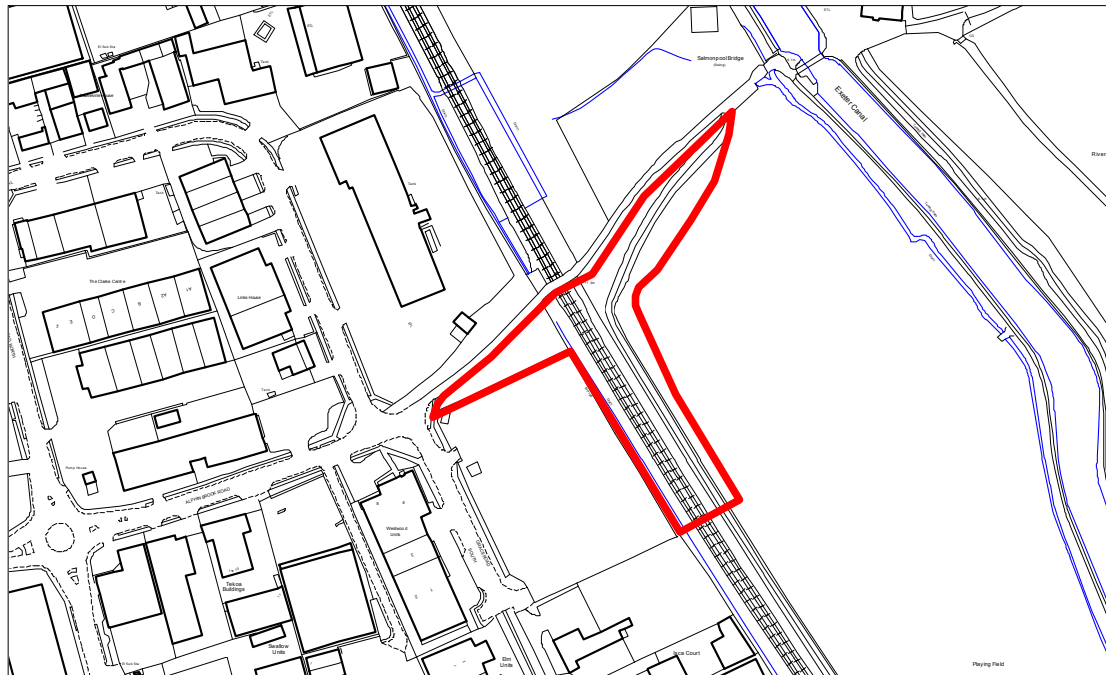
APPLICANT: Devon County Council (Planning, Transportation and Environment)

PROPOSAL: Erection of a two platform railway halt with associated pedestrian footbridge, access and parking/turning area and emergency access road.

LOCATION: Marsh Barton Station, Clapperbrook Lane, Exeter, EX2

REGISTRATION DATE: 15/04/2013

EXPIRY DATE: 05/05/2013



Scale 1:3000

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HISTORY OF SITE

Planning permission was granted for an energy from waste facility on the adjacent site (planning ref 07/0927/25). The site was previously used for incineration and as a waste transfer station. This development is under construction and expected to become operational in summer 2014.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The application site (0.87 hectares) consists largely of existing railway operational land either side of the Exeter to Newton Abbot railway line to the eastern edge of the Marsh Barton Industrial Estate. The new station would be positioned on the eastern side of the new Energy from Waste facility currently under construction on Grace Road South.

The application is for a two platform railway station. The station will be unstaffed, but fully accessible with waiting shelters, cycle racks, lighting, CCTV and a Help Point/ Customer Information Service. It is proposed to erect a new steel footbridge to provide access across the railway for pedestrians and cyclists.

Each of the platforms will be 125 metres in length, sufficient to accommodate four carriage trains.

A waiting shelter (containing a Help/Information Point) will be provided on each platform and measure 7.3 metres wide, 2 metres deep and 2.5 metres high.

Cycle storage shelters will be provided adjacent to both platforms and will accommodate 10 cycle stands (up to 20 bicycles) on each side of the railway. These will measure approximately 7 metres wide, 2 metres deep and 1.97 metres in height. Whilst 40 cycle spaces are provided it is anticipated that demand will increase as service improvements are made between Exeter and Paignton to provide a 30 minute service frequency and so additional facilities will need to be provided in the future to around 20 more spaces. The proposed cycle facilities are within covered shelters, covered by CCTV and motion sensor lighting.

The new pedestrian footbridge will be located to the south of and adjacent to the existing bridge for Clapperbrook Lane East. The footbridge will provide ramped and stair access to the platforms and bridge deck. The deck of the footbridge will be approximately 6 metres above the existing ground level of the railway, with parapets of 1.6 metres. The new footbridge has been designed to ensure that the station is fully accessible for all user groups.

Access to the station will be from Clapperbrook Lane East, with a new access road with parking for 6 cars, 2 of which will be dedicated disabled spaces, provided to the east of the site (the southbound platform). A drop off point will also be provided. The new road carriageway will be 4.8 metres wide, with a 1.5 metres footway provided. To the west of the site serving the northbound platform a 3 metre emergency vehicle access with pedestrian/cyclist link will also be provided.

Platform lighting will be mounted on 7 metre high columns. The lanterns will utilise high efficiency fluorescent lamps and use flat glass diffusers to minimise glare and overspill to surrounding areas. These lights will also illuminate the staircases for the footbridge. Lighting columns will also be provided within the proposed main access and car park to the east of the railway and at the site entrance with Clapperbrook Lane.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

The application was accompanied by a Planning Statement which incorporated the Design and Access Statement, In addition, the following documents have been provided:- Construction Traffic Management Plan, Flood Risk Assessment; Sustainability Statement; Ecology Report (Reptile and Dormouse Surveys including Phase 1 Survey Update); Tree Survey Report; Site Waste Management Plan; Geotechnical Interpretative Report and Landscape Design Proposals.

The proposed Marsh Barton railway station helps achieve the transportation objectives defined within the Exeter Local Plan First Review by locating along an existing, used railway line and adjacent to an existing trading estate. Its location will also provide an alternative, sustainable means of travel and reduce the number of individual motor vehicle journeys made to the estate. The design of the station also includes two fully accessible platforms, which will ensure that all user groups, particularly the vulnerable and mobility impaired will benefit from the proposal

Main benefits that will be delivered by the proposed scheme include:

- Improve access to Marsh Barton Trading Estate for both commuting staff.
- Supporting significant levels of planned growth in the Devon area and supporting better access to employment, and leisure opportunities for the local community.
- Achieving the vision of the Devon Metro Project which is to provide a package of measures to improve rail services, including longer trains, increased frequency of some services and several new rail stations, including at Marsh Barton, Newcourt and Edginswell.

- A fully accessible station forecourt with pedestrian footbridge that enables full disabled access, cycle provision, waiting shelters, CCTV, customer information services and security lighting to maintain a safe users experience.
- Accordance with local and national planning policy which seeks to provide sustainable transport options.

Main impacts from the proposed scheme are:-

Landscape - the proposal includes the removal of tree and shrubs in order to facilitate two access points to the station forecourt. To mitigate the vegetation loss, a landscaping scheme is proposed which includes the planting of additional trees and shrubs. It is generally considered that the proposed planting mitigates against the loss and therefore the proposed scheme accords with the provision of planning policy that relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

Visual Impacts - the pedestrian footbridge will be the most visually obtrusive addition to the landscape, however, it is not anticipated to cause any significant deterioration in local visual amenity as it will be viewed in the context of the existing industrial estate and large scale buildings and will be no more intrusive than the existing pedestrian footbridge.

Heritage - it is considered that the proposal will not have any physical impacts on historic structures, archaeological features or palaeoenvironmental deposits. Therefore, no archaeological or building recording will be required in mitigation of the proposed works.

Ecology - a Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in 2012 and identified the presence of three reptile species and the potential to disturb nesting birds during construction. It is considered that with appropriate mitigation in place, the proposal will not have any adverse effects on local ecology.

Noise - it is anticipated that noise levels in the vicinity of the station will increase during construction and operation. However it is anticipated that the noise levels would not increase to levels significantly greater than those already generated by the Marsh Barton Trading Estate and from trains that use the existing railway line.

Air Quality - it is considered that the proposal will have no adverse effect on the local air quality, and in fact, by encouraging a modal shift in transport habits, from use of the motor vehicle to the train, a small improvement in air quality is anticipated locally.

Flooding and Water Quality - the Flood Risk Assessment states that the railway line is at risk of flooding from the River Exe. However, the proposed station platforms are not at risk of fluvial flooding, up to a 1 in 100 annual probability. There is no opportunity to locate the railway station on land in a lower flood risk zone and since the development is classified as 'essential infrastructure' the proposal is considered to meet the Exception Test set out in the NPPF and is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Contaminated land - ground investigations have been undertaken, and no evidence of significant contamination has been found at the site.

Surrounding Amenity - there are no sensitive properties within the site vicinity and therefore no adverse effects on surrounding properties are predicted. The playing field to the east will not be affected by the proposal, nor will there be any effects on the nearby cycleway or walking route at Clapperbrook Lane.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance: National Planning Policy Framework

Section 4 - Promoting Sustainable Transport

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy

CP2 - Employment
CP9 - Transport
CP12 - Flood Risk
CP15 - Sustainable Construction
CP17 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

L1 - Valley Parks
T3 - Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes
T10 - Car Parking Standards
LS1 - Landscape Setting
LS4 - Local Nature Conservation Designation/RIGS
EN3 - Air and Water Quality
EN4 - Flood Risk
DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design
DG7 - Crime Prevention and Safety

OBSERVATIONS

The principle of a new railway halt at Matford/Marsh Barton is established within Core Strategy Policy CP9 as part of the comprehensive strategic transport measures to accommodate the additional development proposed for the city and adjoining areas. It is considered that the station is likely to operate principally as a destination for people travelling to workplaces in Marsh Barton and Matford and across the Valley Park to locations such as County Hall and the RD&E Hospital. The site is well connected with an extensive network of walking and cycling routes within the Valley Park, and along the Alphin Brook. Being a destination for most journeys rather than a point of origin, it is not considered likely to attract significant car-borne traffic. Parking provision is therefore limited to four spaces, plus a further two for disabled users, as well as a set of covered cycle stands on each side of the railway. A new footbridge with steps and full ramped access is proposed, as the existing Clapperbrook Lane road bridge does not provide a direct or wheelchair accessible route across the railway.

Given the principle of the new station is acceptable it is the specific impact of the associated structure that needs to be assessed to ensure the successful integration of the facility within the surrounding area. The proposed station is located a significant distance away from residential properties, the closest being on the opposite side of the River Exe and therefore the station will not cause loss of residential amenity. The issue of lighting of the station, which can potentially have a visual impact over a wider area, has been assessed by the Environmental Health officer and it is not considered to have an adverse impact on nearby properties or businesses. However whilst the majority of the new platform and associated works will be located within railway operational land, the station will, in part be located in a Valley Park and Site of Nature Conservation Importance as designated within the Exeter Local Plan. It is therefore the physical and visual impact of the station within this area which needs to be addressed.

The eastern platform, serving south bound trains (platform 1) is located with the Valley Park and a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. The platform and stairs/ramp will be located predominately on existing railway operational land however it will also result in the removal of an existing hedge. The visual quality of this hedge is considered poor and is sporadic in the area where the platform and ramp is to be located. Consequently the biodiversity benefit of the hedge is considered to be limited, which is an opinion supported by the accompanying Ecological Report and there is no objection to the removal of the hedge. However the enhancement of the vehicular access serving this platform and the creation of six car parking

spaces will potentially have greater harm given it will involve the removal of a number of semi mature and mature trees on both sides of the access road. These trees do form an important linear area of mature planting which helps to screen the proposed application site from wider views and within the Valley Park. It is important that this wooded area is retained. The accompanying landscape plan does show that significant existing trees will be retained and new trees replanted. It is therefore considered that this established wooded area will continue to help screen the platform and the proposed ramp/stairs which will have a maximum height of 8 metres. Subject to a suitable landscape condition and associated maintenance management plan to ensure the continued presence of a tree screen it is considered that this side to the railway station would be effectively screened.

The western platform, serving north bound trains (platform 2) is accessed from alongside the Energy from Waste plant, which is currently under construction. There is currently no pedestrian or vehicular access in this location and the area is largely overgrown with shrubs and several semi mature poplar trees. The application proposes the creation of a new pedestrian and emergency vehicle access, which would involve the removal of a significant area of this existing vegetation. This linear area of land increases in width from approximately 3 metres at its closest point adjacent to the junction of Clapperbrook Lane and Grace Road increasing to 25 metres adjacent to the proposed platform. Consequently in some areas the construction of the new access will be close to existing trees which are identified for retention. It is considered that the proximity of the proposed access will inevitably have an impact on these tree's future health. The potential for immediate or long term damage is further heightened by the changes in levels across this section of the site. It is important that trees continue to provide an attractive landscaped entrance into the Valley Park and also help to screen the new station. It is therefore considered that rather than attempting to retain some of the existing trees, as identified on the submitted landscape plan, a more realistic plan is produced which accepts that more existing trees will need to be removed. The existing trees are not considered worthy of preservation orders and given the narrowness of this part of this site, it is likely that they will be damaged during construction works in any case. It is therefore considered that a suitable condition is imposed to include a mixture of container grown stock and whips and a maintenance management plan provided to ensure the continued presence of trees in this location.

It is considered that the existing vegetation and proposed replanting will ensure that the structures associated with the station are effectively screened. Whilst the lower level facilities such as the platform, parking area, cycle racks and the waiting shelters would not be visible, the presence of landscaping is particularly important for the higher ramp, stairs and footbridge. It is however considered that the existing bridge over the railway will help to screen the new footbridge and the Energy from Waste facility will still continue to be the most dominant structure in the area and hide from of the station from public view on the Marsh Barton side.

The submitted plan shows the pedestrian path serving platform 2 meeting the junction of Clapperbrook Lane and Grace Road. As previously stated it is considered that this area represents an important entrance into the Valley Park. As presented the proposed arrangement does not allow for further landscape enhancement opportunities which would be possible if this access layout was reconfigured. Accordingly given this entrance is highly visible, it is considered that this area should be redesigned to ensure the most appropriate integration of pedestrian, cyclist, vehicular and landscaping opportunity is achieved.

In conclusion, it is considered that the facility is appropriate in policy terms and subject to suitable landscape and continued maintenance conditions being imposed the area would continue to be well screened from wider views and in particular from the Valley Park. Additional issues such as the Clapperbrook Lane/ Grace Road junction should be further investigated. In addition, it is considered that a condition should be imposed to ensure there is not excessive spillage from the proposed lighting for the station. It is also considered that a comment made that the construction of the works should not prejudice the potential for the supply of heat from the Energy from Waste Plant to meet the demand east of the River Exe,

as identified in the Exeter Energy Network Study and opportunities to facilitate this connection through the station and bridge design should be explored.

WESTERN AREA WORKING PARTY

30 April 2013 - Members were advised that the application from Devon County Council would be reported to Planning Committee. Members were broadly supportive of the proposed but commented on the need to ensure good access to existing pedestrian and cycle networks.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council raise **NO OBJECTION** subject to conditions in respect of a revised landscape plan showing a complete replanting of the western side of the site and further consideration of the access arrangement from the Clapperbrook Lane/Grace Road junction. In addition, a comment should be made to ensure the future consideration of the need to facilitate connections in respect of District Energy Network.

Local Government (Access to Information) 1985 (as amended).
Background papers used in compiling the report:

Files of planning applications available for inspection from the Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter: Telephone 01392 265223