

ITEM NO. 6

COMMITTEE DATE: 24/06/2013

APPLICATION NO: 13/3207/26

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL
CONSULTATION

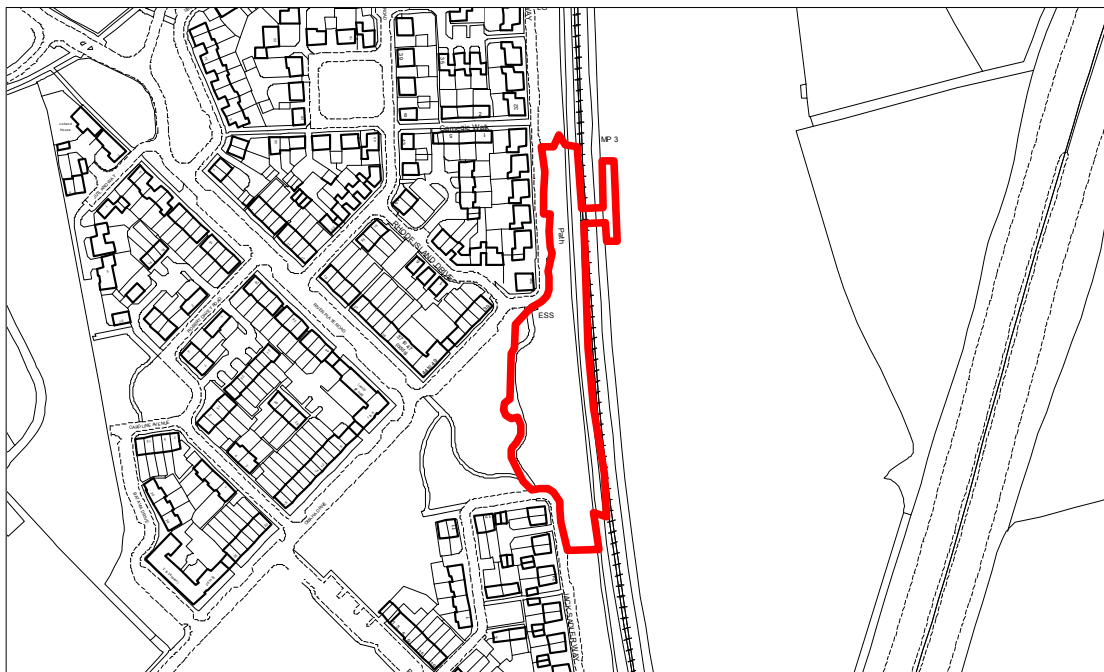
APPLICANT: Devon County Council (Planning, Transportation and Environment)

PROPOSAL: Erection of a single platform railway station on the existing Exeter-Exmouth railway line with associated pedestrian, vehicular access and parking area and provision for a future underpass crossing

LOCATION: Newcourt Station, Old Rydon Lane, Exeter, EX2

REGISTRATION DATE: 26/04/2013

EXPIRY DATE: 24/05/2013



Scale 1:3000

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DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The application site (0.66 hectares) consists largely of existing railway operational land either side of the Exeter to Exmouth railway line which travels in a north to south direction. The new station would be positioned on the eastern side of Liberty Way and adjacent the public open space.

The application is for a single platform railway station on a single track line. The station will be unstaffed, but fully accessible with waiting shelters, cycle racks, lighting, cctv and a Help Point/ Customer Information Service. In the future it is proposed to erect a new subway underneath the track to provide access for pedestrians and cyclists to an area which is identified in the Newcourt Masterplan for future development. The platform will be fully accessible, with both stepped and ramped access provided.

The platforms will be 124 metres in length, sufficient to accommodate four carriage trains.

The waiting shelter (containing a Help/Information Point) will measure 7.3 metres wide, 2 metres deep and 2.5 metres high.

A cycle storage shelter will be provided adjacent to the platform and will accommodate 20 cycle stands. These will be covered cycle shelters and measure approximately 6.9 metres wide and 2 metres in height. This will be positioned alongside the entrance into the station.

A total of 4 car parking spaces are to be provided for disabled badge holders only, adjacent to the station's entrance.

An existing public footpath which lies adjacent to the railway will be diverted to be located in the open space between the new station and existing housing in Liberty Way which will be subject to a separate diversion order.

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. The access path and car park at the north end will be lit by an extension of the highway lighting on Liberty Way. No additional lighting is to be provided for the path from Jack Sadler Way.

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, 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 principle for the creation of a railway station at Newcourt is established in local and national planning policy, both of which seek to deliver sustainable transport options for local communities. The proposed railway station at Newcourt is supported by the Exeter Core Strategy CP19 and Exeter Local Plan Policy KP8 which seeks to improve rail facilities in the Newcourt area.

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

- Improve access to the Newcourt community and forthcoming employment areas.
- 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 (Torquay).
- A fully accessible station forecourt that enables full disabled access, cycle provision, waiting shelters, CCTV, customer information services and security lighting to maintain a safe user experience.
- Achieving accordance with local and national planning policy which seeks to provide sustainable transport options for the Newcourt growth area and its current and future residents.

Main impacts from the proposed scheme are:-

Landscape - the proposal includes the removal of tree and shrubs in order to accommodate the proposal. To mitigate the vegetation loss, a landscaping scheme is proposed which includes the planting of additional trees and shrubs along the railway line and within the newly designed public open space. It is considered that the proposed planting mitigates against the loss of existing planting and therefore the proposed scheme is considered to have a slight adverse impact on the local landscape.

Visual Impacts - it is considered that there would be moderate adverse visual impact on the nearby residential communities given the close proximity to the railway station and car parks.

The proposed planting scheme would help to reduce the visual impacts in the longer term as planting establishes.

Heritage - it is considered that the proposal will not have any physical impacts on historic structures, archaeological features or palaeoenvironmental deposits. The Grade II listed building Newcourt House is located nearby but not considered affected by the proposals.

Ecology - a Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in 2012 and identified the presence of two 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 existing railway line and the M5 motorway which is less than 250m to the east.

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 the use of the motor vehicle to the train, a small improvement in air quality is anticipated locally.

Flooding and Water Quality - the site is not located within any Flood Zones, however it is within a groundwater source protection zone, which could potentially be contaminated during construction. By ensuring best practice measures are in place, the risk of a pollution event is significantly reduced, ensuring local water quality is maintained.

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

Surrounding Amenity - there are residential properties within the vicinity of the site, to the west, however the location of the proposed station has been selected to minimise effects on these properties. They will not be directly overlooked by the station as it will be located adjacent to an area of amenity open space. No significant adverse effects on surrounding properties are therefore anticipated.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance: National Planning Policy Framework

Section 4 - Promoting Sustainable Transport

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy

CP9 - Transport
CP15 - Sustainable Construction
CP17 - Design and Local Distinctiveness
CP18 - Infrastructure
CP19 - Strategic Allocations

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

KP8 - Newcourt Area
H3 - Housing Sites
T1 - Hierarchy of Modes
T3 - Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes
T5 - Cycle Route Network
T10 - Car Parking Standards
LS1 - Landscape Setting

EN5 - Noise
DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design
DG7 - Crime Prevention and Safety

Newcourt Masterplan adopted November 2010 which in the transport section states that:-

Rail use is considered to have the greatest potential to reduce the level of private car use at Newcourt. Land will be safeguarded for a new rail halt on the Exeter to Exmouth line within the Masterplan area. A new rail line crossing will be provided at this point. Pedestrian and cycle connections to the halt through the Masterplan area shall be provided.

OBSERVATIONS

Development Plan support for the provision of a new railway station in this location is contained within Policy CP19 of the Exeter Core Strategy, Policy KP8 of the Exeter Local Plan First Review and the Newcourt Masterplan. The National Planning Policy Framework in paragraph 196 states that '*... planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*' Currently only the land west of the station is being developed, this being an expanding residential area which forms part of the Newcourt strategic allocation. Good permeability for pedestrians and cyclists means that the station will be easily accessible by these modes from a large number of homes. The station will also be within easy reach of the strategic cycling route and bus service in the area. It is not considered likely to attract car-borne passengers, being relatively inaccessible by car from the wider road network. Parking provision is therefore limited to four spaces for disabled users, as well as a set of covered cycle stands. Devon County Council are proposing to upgrade the existing path parallel with the railway to provide an improved route to and from Sandy Park stadium, away from properties in Liberty Way. The land on the eastern side of the railway also forms part of the strategic allocation, and Policy CP19 envisages a pedestrian and cycle crossing of the line. A subway rather than a bridge is proposed because of the difference in levels either side of the railway which would make the bridge visually intrusive. Although included in the planning application, the subway will not be constructed until the land on the eastern side of the railway is developed. Consequently given this context of conformity with the development plan, it is the site specific elements of the scheme which require further comment.

The construction of the station will mainly be contained within the railway's operational land which is on the eastern side of the existing footpath adjacent to the track. However the extent of the platform, future subway and associated facilities will necessitate the loss of a number of existing trees. The removal of several existing oak trees and a large sycamore tree in this location is regrettable as they present an attractive feature within the immediate and wider surrounding area. However it is accepted that in operational terms this site is the most appropriate location for the new station and this supported by the relevant development plan policies. Accordingly it is important that the proposed replanting is substantial to compensate for this loss. The submitted landscape scheme shows replanting with a mixture of standard to extra standard silver birch and oak trees which are to be located within the existing open space. This level of planting is considered to provide sufficient cover in the future to compensate for the short term loss of existing trees. The landscape plan does indicate that some existing oak and silver birch trees will be retained adjacent to the main entrance into the station. It is important that these trees are safeguarded to ensure the successful integration of the facility into the area and provide a level of immediate screening of the station from residents living in Liberty Way.

The character of the area is enhanced by the existing area of public open space located to the west of the proposed station. It is considered that the proposed tree planting will enhance the visual quality of the area and help to screen the facility from wider views. Accordingly any erosion of this open space should be carefully considered. It is accepted that an element of disabled parking is necessary for the station and this will be important to ensure the existing residents in the area, do not suffer from parking problems. However the proposed parking

area for four cars appear excessive, over-engineered and does not appear well integrated into the area. It is therefore considered that this area should be redesigned with a reduced footprint with appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment. As submitted the parking proposed would represent an unacceptable intrusion into this area of public open space.

The location of the station has previously been identified in the Newcourt Masterplan which was adopted prior to the development of the existing houses, which are now occupied closest to the site. Accordingly residents in the immediate vicinity may have been aware a station would be built in the future in this location. However at the time of purchase no details of the station in terms of platform/ subway location, parking area, cycle shelters, lighting columns and footpath location would have been available and therefore it is important that residents do not suffer undue loss of amenity as a result of this detailed scheme. The proposed lighting has been assessed by the Environmental Health officer and considered to be acceptable given its relation to residential properties. It is considered that the proposed planting will help to minimise the visual impact of the station and as previously stated subject to the redesign of the parking area the character and appearance of the public open space will be retained. In addition, the planting will be beneficial to help mitigate the appearance of the station and associated lights when seen from wider views given its ridgeline location. In general, the construction of the station will not result in development coming closer to residential properties than the existing railway line. However the future construction of the subway will result in the loss of existing trees which as a group form an important landscape feature in the area. In addition, the diversion of the footpath will be relocated approximately 3 metres closer to properties in Liberty Way. It is therefore important that significant planting is provided in this location. Whilst it is accepted that some replanting has already occurred in this location, it is considered that the submitted plans are insufficient in detail to ensure that an effective landscape screen will be maintained in the future.

In summary, it is considered that the provision of substantial landscaping to compensate for the loss of existing mature vegetation will help to integrate the station within the area. This is considered important as the site can be viewed from wider areas to the east as well as from more immediate views from Liberty Way and Jack Sadler Way in particular. Details are required of the additional landscaping particularly adjacent to the proposed subway, the proposed surfacing and boundary treatments adjacent to the platform. Galvanised fencing would not be acceptable in this location given the proximity to residential properties and therefore a powder coated fencing detail would be more appropriate. In addition, a redesign of the parking area is required. However subject to these matters being addressed the station would represent an acceptable scheme which is supported by development plan policies.

WESTERN AREA WORKING PARTY

5 June 2013 - Members were advised that the application from Devon County Council would be reported to Planning Committee with a recommendation of no objection subject to issues of details, particularly in relation to landscaping.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council raise **NO OBJECTION** subject to a further detailed condition being imposed in respect of landscaping adjacent to the proposed subway and boundary treatment and a condition ensuring no public audible information system is provided. In addition a revision to the submitted parking layout is required.

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