

REPORT TO THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report No.

Date of Meeting	27 June 2012		
Application Number	N/11/04113/FUL		
Site Address	Land at Chippenham Railway Station, Cocklebury Road, Chippenham SN15 3QH		
Proposal	Proposed Stand Alone Car Park		
Applicant	Network Rail		
Town/Parish Council	Chippenham Town Council		
Electoral Division	Chippenham Monkton	Unitary Member	Cllr Christopher Caswill
Grid Ref	392284 173843		
Type of application	Full		
Case Officer	Chris Marsh	01225 706657	chris.marsh@wiltshire.gov.uk

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The Unitary Member has called the application to Committee in order to consider the general impact of the development on the site and its setting.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions.

2. Main Issues

The main issues for consideration are as follows:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area
- Impact on neighbour amenity
- Impact on highways

3. Site Description

The application relates to a parcel of land located immediately East of the existing railway car park between the railway lines and Cocklebury Road. The site comprises some 5,080m² of former railway land, including some areas of hardstanding associated with the former goods yard at its West end, arranged in an elongated form narrowing to the East.

Until recently, the site hosted a mixture of tree and plant species, however, those not within the Conservation Area have now been removed, lending an exposed appearance to the land between the College building to the South of Cocklebury Road and the Westinghouse estate. This exercise exposed the remains of a 19th Century goods platform in the centre of the site, which lies immediately East of the boundary of the Conservation Area, which covers the Western half of the site. A badger habitat has been identified at the site's Eastern end and the greenery in its immediate surroundings has been retained.

The site was acquired by Network Rail in late 2010, having previously been owned by Royal Mail with only rights of access along the Northern boundary of the site for railway maintenance work. Having once been a goods station and yard believed to date from the 1841 establishment of the railway in Chippenham, the site has not seen any particular use since the 1970s.

4. Relevant Planning History

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
N/11/03080/FUL	Proposed Stand-Alone Car Park. Change of Use to Operational Railway Land	Withdrawn
N/10/00899/FUL	Erection of New Vehicle Access Gate & Fencing Following Demolition of Existing Buildings & Fence	Permission
N/09/02280/CAC	Demolition of Two Curtilage Listed Buildings and Boundary Fence	Permission

5. Proposal

The application is a resubmission of a previous scheme (11/03080/FUL refers), which was withdrawn for a number of reasons relating to the quality of design and implications of a change of use of the land, for which there was little substantial justification. The current scheme addresses the concerns raised during the course of the previous application and seeks permission for a car park only, on a slightly revised site area. Due to the electrification works to Chippenham Station over the coming years, part of the existing Western Network Rail car park will be temporarily closed for the use of contractors and the car parking displaced accordingly.

Under the revised proposal, the majority of the site is to be re-graded and surfaced in order to accommodate some 166 parking spaces in order to serve the demands of Chippenham Railway Station. The existing splayed access is to be retained and will provide vehicular access and egress to the split-level car park that will extend most of the length of the site. Pedestrian access is to be provided separately via an open footpath linking to Cocklebury Road at the Southwest corner of the site. Due to the undulating levels of the site, particularly at its Eastern end, ground works are required to provide a simple split-level layout, with a shallow ramp at either end and a short retaining wall through the centre of the site, accounting for the variation in site levels over a distance of 25m.

Whilst the majority of the site is to be surfaced in tarmac, the boundary treatment where the site borders Cocklebury Road has been the subject of lengthy negotiation and a suitable scheme generated. This comprises a 1.5m coursed Bath stone wall with coping detail, behind which will be a series of native tree species along the length of this boundary. Owing to the presence of power lines, choice and density is restricted, and the railway line precludes any such planting along the Northern boundary. The trees are to be protected by low-level metal guards and a bull-nose kerb running the length of the slightly raised grass verge into which they are to be set, which extends to a depth of 1.7m into the car park.

The Northern and Western site edges are to retain their chain link fence boundaries, with little alternative due to the operational railway track and separately-run car park adjacent. 5.5m steel LED lighting columns are to be distributed around the perimeter and additionally in pairs through the centre of the wider part of the site. The existing splayed access to the site is to be altered slightly but will generally follow the same form, providing direct access and visibility onto Cocklebury Road. Where the access narrows to pillars accommodating a height restriction bar, a slot drain is to be installed to intercept surface water.

The badger sett area at the site's Eastern end has been set aside from the proposal and is to be screened from the car park by a security fence with secure access through for the purposes of railway maintenance. In any case, the sett and its immediate surroundings are covered under the Protection of Badgers Act 1991, which affords the habitat statutory protection.

6. Consultations

Chippenham Town Council – no objection in principle, however the following comments are raised:

- *“The proposed stand-alone car park will require a new, separate entrance/exit and considers this is unnecessary and will be potentially detrimental to the sound management of traffic flows in Cocklebury Road, adding to the conflicts that already exist between vehicles exiting railway premises and through traffic. The Council considers that the respective owners of the car parks, both of which are in the railway business, should seek an arrangement to ensure an integrated approach for car parking at the station.*
- *The Town Council is mindful of the potential increase in traffic in Cocklebury Road over the next few years resulting from potential housing development in the area, including Rawlings Green and on the north side of the railway, with the possibility of a new link across the railway to Monkton Park and Cocklebury Road. It notes that there is potential for an extension of National Cycle Route 4 in this area which would provide separation for cyclists accessing the station and town centre from motor traffic on Cocklebury Road. Consideration should be given to making provision for the cycle route alongside the railway, and plans for existing and future railway car parks should facilitate this, in conjunction with Sustrans and the Highway Authority.*
- *The Council is concerned that if the new car park is designated ‘operational railway land’ the Planning Authority would then have no powers over any additional development on the site. This area of land is identified in the Core Strategy Consultation Document as part of the central area of opportunity in Chippenham for redevelopment and regeneration. The ability to ensure that development on this site in the future is in line with these regeneration objectives could be severely compromised.”*

Highways – no objection, access has been agreed in principle

Urban Design – no objection

Environmental Health – no objection

Rights of Way – no objection

Conservation – no objection, subject to archaeological recording of platform

English Heritage – [awaiting comment]

7. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice, press advert and neighbour consultation.

Two letters of objection from nearby residents have been received, citing concern over the potential exacerbation of light pollution caused by floodlights in this area and loss of amenity.

8. Planning Considerations

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area
- Impact on neighbour amenity
- Impact on highways

Acknowledging that the site in its current condition offers little benefit to Cocklebury Road or the immediate area, particularly since the clearance of much of the greenery, the principle of development for the purposes of car parking in association is considered acceptable. Development plan transport policy emphasises the importance of providing adequate off-street parking and facilitating the use of public transport wherever possible, and therefore the reasoning behind the proposal is sound in policy terms. However, the impact of an effective extension of an already expansive swathe of parking is such that suitable mitigation in terms of design and street scene is required in order to ensure that the development does not detract from the amenity of the area.

Cocklebury Road is characterised by its mixture of uses and already features large areas of car parking further to the West of the site in question. It is therefore desirable to minimise the visual impact of such an expanse of vehicles, especially when considered in the context of the Sadlers Mead and Wiltshire College car parks to the South of Cocklebury Road and the Westinghouse car park to the North of the railway. The cumulative effect of car parking in the area, given the relatively elongated form of the site, is such that a high-quality is warranted as part of the scheme.

Following the submission of the application, which provided very little information relating to the remains of a goods platform in the centre of the site, a request was made to English Heritage to consider whether this structure would be worthy of listing, either in its own right or as part of the Grade II-listed Chippenham Station. The outcome of this exercise was that the structure would not qualify for listing and this decision is attached at **Appendix I**. As such, there is no statutory basis to preserve the platform, which has been proposed for demolition by the applicant, and to seek to protect the structure would not be reasonable. The National Planning Policy Framework states that where loss of non-designated heritage assets or less than substantial harm is incurred, this impact should be weighed against the public benefit of the scheme, in this instance in supporting rail use.

It is understood that the residents of Esmead, to the South of the site, have experienced problems with light pollution nuisance emanating from the Westinghouse site, to the North of the railway, owing to the high-power lighting fixed to a number of the buildings. This may have been exacerbated by the removal of trees from the application site earlier this year, which may have previously provided some degree of screening. The current scheme includes provision of a number of 6m lighting columns, upon which LED lights are to be attached, distributed throughout the site boundaries and along the central parking rank, which should be screened to avoid glare.

The scheme has previously been subject to pre-application discussions with the Highways Officer in respect of the proposed access and egress to and from the site, the volume of traffic anticipated and the impact upon the safety of Cocklebury Road. As confirmed by the representation received, the Officer is satisfied that the proposed configuration provides adequate space and visibility to enable the safe movement of vehicles between the site and the adjacent highway, without posing a significant risk to pedestrian safety. The prospect of a shared access, and associated pedestrian route, with the adjacent car park to the West has been considered, however no resolution has been reached between the respective operators. Whilst the Town Council's comments are noted, and this might perhaps be a preferable solution, the creation of a new access, given its acceptability in its own right and adaptation from the existing, is considered satisfactory.

9. Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal is acceptable in principle given the lack of a design brief for this area of Chippenham. The access arrangements are considered adequate in terms of maintaining highway and pedestrian safety, which is further affirmed by the separate pedestrian access to the site. The revised proposed boundary treatments are sufficient to mitigate the visual impact of additional car parking on this site without compromising public safety and will serve as an overall enhancement to this stretch of Cocklebury Road.

10. Recommendation

Planning Permission be GRANTED for the following reason:

The proposed development will not adversely affect the character or appearance of the site or the Chippenham Conservation Area. The measures proposed in the applicant's supporting documentation are considered sufficient to mitigate any adverse impacts on the ecology of the site. Subject to the subsequent agreement of lighting and boundary treatments, the proposal will not significantly harm the residential amenity of the locality. The proposal therefore accords with Policies C3, NE9, HE1, T1, T3, T4 and T5 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

And subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 No works shall commence on site until an archaeological survey and recording of the existing historic platform structure in situ has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of maintaining a record of the undesignated heritage asset on the site.

- 3 No development shall commence on site until details and samples of the external stonework, including type, coursing and bedding of the natural stone, type of pointing and mortar mix, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The external stonework shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

- 4 All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first use or completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

- 5 The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until the first five metres of the access, measured from the edge of the carriageway, has been consolidated and surfaced (not loose stone or gravel). The access shall be maintained as such thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

- 6 No development shall commence on site until details of external cowls, louvers or other shields to be fitted to the floodlights to reduce light pollution, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be put in place before the floodlights are first brought into use and shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To minimise light pollution and in the interests of the amenities of the area.

- 7 The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the submitted plans and documents listed below. No variation from the approved plans should be made without the prior approval of the local planning authority. Amendments may require the submission of a further application.

440304/C/100 rev J - Proposed General Arrangement (sheet 1)
440304/C/100 rev J - Proposed General Arrangement (sheet 2)
440304/C/105 rev J - Elevations Existing and Proposed
440304/C/200 - Cross Sections, Proposed Cut & Fill (sheet 1)
440304/C/200 - Cross Sections, Detailed Sections (sheet 2)
440304-C108 rev C - Retaining Wall & Grass Verge Detail
440304/C/102 rev C - Surface Water Proposed Drainage Plan
440304/C/101 rev C - Traffic Paths & Turning Circles

Received 21 May 2012

REASON: To ensure that the development is implemented as approved.

INFORMATIVES

1. No specific details are submitted in respect of any signage, ticket machines, etc, to be incorporated into the scheme. Any advertisement which does not have consent by virtue of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 (as amended) must not be displayed unless you have received the necessary consent from the local planning authority. Application forms are available, on request, from the local planning authority.
2. The applicant should note that there may be badger setts in the vicinity of the site, and as a consequence compliance with certain requirements and provisions of the Badgers Act 1991 may be necessary. If this is the case the applicant is advised to contact Natural England who are responsible for issuing licences relating to development on the site of badger setts.

Appendices:	Appendix I – English Heritage Reject at Initial Assessment Report
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	As above

