

Agenda item 4: Draft response to the consultation on the Didcot Garden Town Proposed Delivery Plan

The Cultural Spine

The cultural spine, defined as Broadway, Wantage road and Didcot road.

Proposals to include, wider improved pavements to allow for temporary uses such as market traders, a dedicated space for cyclists and where possible separated from other vehicles, and a new public space next to the Baptist house.

The current parking bays on the Broadway, many of which are for disabled users, provide a well-used and much needed short-term parking solution. The consultation hints at the removal of these parking spaces. Any alterations to the Broadway, should continue to provide disabled parking and a short-term parking solution must remain a feature of the Broadway, to support the retailers, takeaways and restaurants.

The Broadway already benefits from a wide verge to the south side. This space is already well used by residents and already boasts benches, grassed areas and trees to offer shade. It is a concern that in a pursuit to offer something better, we could end up with something worse in its place. The proposed Cycle lanes and improvements to pavements, will need to be contained within the existing space of the Broadway corridor. It should be a fundamental requirement that the existing positive areas, become the building blocks in future development.

The addition of a public space to the front of the Baptist house is welcomed.

The cultural spine will include the Didcot Civic Hall. The Civic hall offers the potential of a key public venue within the cultural spine.

Gateway South

The Gateway site should be considered a priority. The site has been derelict and run down for many years now. The site sits directly opposite Didcot station and sets the first impression for people arriving by train. The Gateway site offers the potential of a statement development, a development that supports and re-enforces Didcot as a Garden Town.

The Prince of Wales public house should be retained in a bid to embrace Didcot's history and heritage of a railway town.

The development should be sympathetic in character and designed to blend into the residential areas boarding the site.

The removal of Gateway north and development on Ladygrove Park In March 2017 is welcomed and should be permanent ruled out of future considerations.

Agenda item 4: Draft response to the consultation on the Didcot Garden Town Proposed Delivery Plan

The Garden Line

The principal of the Garden Line is welcomed. It will provide a safe and green transport link between Didcot and the employment zones of Harwell and Culham. Networks should also be improved into Milton Park. The current proposed route includes Cow Lane Bridge and leads to a suggestion of a proposed stopping up. The Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan itself in 5.1.1 “a connected future” states that there is “a high level of north/south severance by the railway line”. Cow Lane should remain open to vehicle traffic and the possibility of 2-way traffic considered. The closure of Cow Lane Bridge would put additional traffic on the northern perimeter road and lead to increased journey times and pollution. The Garden Line could instead use the pedestrian tunnel on Hitchcock Way.

The aspiration for the use of autonomous vehicles should be subject to further public consultation should it become a reality. The proposed route runs through residential areas often within metres of homes and on existing public footpaths. There are concerns that this proposal could lead to some form of mass transit system, running through Didcot’s green footpaths bringing noise and visual unattractiveness.

Rich’s Sidings

The development of Rich’s Sidings proposes a realignment of Broadway and Hitchcock Way, with the removal of the Jubilee Way roundabout. The Jubilee Way roundabout has become a traffic pinch point and leads to long queues at busier times. The redesign should allow for easier traffic flows with increased capacity, to futureproof for additional traffic generated by the predicted increase in housing. Pedestrian and cycle routes should also be improved to allow easier navigation of the junction, with less disruption to traffic flows, underpass/overpass for example. Hitchcock Way provides the main access into the orchard centre. Although it is possible for residents of Didcot to access the Orchard Centre via green or public transport, the catchment area for the Orchard Centre is vast and most out of town users will continue to arrive via car. There should be no calming of these routes.

Didcot Parkway Station and the Gateway spine.

Improvements and redevelopment to Didcot station are welcomed. The current delivery plan appears to fall silent on the delivery of previous proposals to relocate the station. The relocation of Didcot station would prove to be very expensive and offer little benefit. The station already sits within a few hundred meters of the town centre and is currently undergoing a multimillion pound improvement to parking facilities. The station currently sits directly opposite the proposed gateway site and is the reason why it has been named the Gateway. Access to cross country services could be obtained through the use of satellite platforms on the east curve.

Agenda item 4: Draft response to the consultation on the Didcot Garden Town Proposed Delivery Plan

Proposals for a shared surface across station road could prove impractical, as Station Road forms a major cross-town artery providing access to the Orchard Centre including HGVs. A reasonable volume of the traffic using Station Road is through-town traffic, by which we define as vehicles that neither the start and end destination are in Didcot, often directed by satellite navigation. Improved signage and use of technology to direct traffic to use the A4130 northern perimeter road could ease traffic on Station Road.

The A4130 should be upgraded to a dual carriageway to cope with additional traffic generated as Great Western Park reaches completion and Valley Park begins.

Proposals for Science Bridge pose the opportunity for a unique landmark structure instantly identifiable to Didcot.

Ladygrove East

Ladygrove East has long been accepted in principal for development but there has been no official application to date. The completion of the Northern Perimeter road extension should come forward as an urgent upfront scheme.

Sports and Leisure

The addition of new sports and leisure facilities are welcomed but, good quality facilities should spread evenly across the town. Facilities should be located to serve existing areas as well as new development. Existing facilities such as Edmonds Park and Loyd Rec would pose ideal locations for upgrade specifically to changing rooms.

The proposed new leisure centre with swimming pool is urgently needed. Bringing the town's swimming pool and leisure centre together in one place will undoubtedly prove to be beneficial. The site should be well connected with access from cycle routes and public transport. Sufficient parking should be provided.

The inclusion of Didcot Railway Centre in the garden town proposals is supported. The Railway Centre is a great asset for Didcot and offers a unique tourist destination for both resident and visitors.

Employment Creation and Enterprise Zones

Job creation will be vital in providing employment for the predicted doubling of Didcot's population. A variety of high and low skilled jobs will be required to meet the needs of all. It is disappointing there be no new meaningful employment sites within Didcot. Enterprise zones will need green and public transport options to limit vehicle movements and local traffic.

Agenda item 4: Draft response to the consultation on the Didcot Garden Town Proposed Delivery Plan

It is disappointing that a hotel may now not form part of the Gateway site. Didcot would benefit from a hotel in the town preferably within walking distance of the train station. The future development of the Vauxhall Barracks could offer an alternative option for a hotel location and an employment zone within the town.

Protecting our Villages

The Garden Town Delivery document talks about defining clear boundaries between Didcot and its neighbouring villages. This is vital to protecting the individual identities and rural feel of our villages.

Villages around Didcot are already being drawn into the urban spread of the town, with their separation gaps under threat. It is questionable as to how this can be achieved when Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils are unable to demonstrate a 5-year land supply.

Summary

Didcot Town Council supports the principle of the Garden Town.

To date it is felt that there has been no formal input into the proposals by the Town Council. The current consultation will provide an important insight into the views of the residents of Didcot and the surrounding areas. The information collated should be used to form the foundations of the Garden Town delivery, with all decisions made with the residents' best interests as the core principle.