

## **1. Application Details**

Application Ref: WD/D/19/002627

Site Location: Dorset County Hospital, Williams Avenue, Dorchester DT1 2JY

Proposal: Erection of multi storey car park & improvements to internal site roads & temporary change of use of former school field to car parking.

Applicant: Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust & Prime (UK) Development

Case Officer: Huw Williams

Ward Member(s): Cllr Andy Canning  
Cllr Les Fry

The application, the plans and other documents submitted with the application may be inspected online at [https://planning.dorset.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=DCAPR\\_139869](https://planning.dorset.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=DCAPR_139869).

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Refuse to grant planning permission for the reasons set out in section 3 below.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 On account of its size, positioning and massing the proposed multi storey car park would appear as an incongruous addition to the hospital campus out of character with neighbouring and surrounding development, detracting from the character and appearance of both the locality and Dorchester's wider landscape setting. It is further considered that the proposed development would not:
- (i) add to the overall quality of the area;
  - (ii) take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area;
  - (iii) make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; or
  - (iv) relate positively to adjoining buildings and other features that contribute to the character of the area.

In consequence, the application proposal is contrary to policies ENV1,ENV4, ENV10 and ENV12 of the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 and further contrary to paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3.2 Through detrimental change in their setting, the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of designated heritage assets in the near vicinity of the application site including the Dorchester Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Damers Hospital, Dorchester West Railway Station and the Dorchester Military Museum. Through similarly obvious and marked detrimental change in the setting of the former Cornwall Hotel (now known as the Georgie Porgie) the proposed development would also cause less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of this undesignated key building in the the Dorchester

Conservation Area. Less pronounced but material detriment to the setting of more distant designated heritage assets including the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Borough Garden and scheduled monuments at Maumbury Rings, Poundbury Camp and Maiden Castle would also cause further less than substantial harm to their heritage significance. Public benefit would accrue from the application proposal in that use of the proposed development would directly benefit hospital staff, patients and visitors; the direct economic impact would be beneficial; provision of the proposed multi storey car park would help to free up space elsewhere in the hospital campus that is currently given over to surface level parking for other potential healthcare and/or health service related development; and there would be net gains for biodiversity. However, with great weight given to the desirability of preserving the significance of the designated heritage, in the absence of a detailed options appraisal and having regard to the size of the hospital campus and the positioning, nature and extent of the existing development both within and beyond the campus, it is considered that it has not been clearly and convincingly established that the consequent harm to heritage significance has been justified, nor that the public benefits associated with the proposed development could not be realised in some other less harmful way nor that the potential benefits of the proposed development would clearly and convincingly outweigh the overall harm to heritage significance. The proposed development is therefore contrary to policy ENV4 of the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 and paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### **4. Summary of Main Planning Issues**

<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Conclusion:</b>
Principle of Development	No in-principle land use objection.
Implications for equality and disadvantage	Proposed arrangements are adequate and reasonable.
Sustainable transport and impact on highway network	Provision made for sustainable travel and likely impact on the safety and operation of highway network are considered to be acceptable.
Economic impact	Beneficial. Substantial investment and construction project in its own right and potential precursor to further healthcare and health service development. Considerable weight and importance may be accorded to potential economic benefits of the proposed development.
Nature Conservation and biodiversity impact	Net gains in accordance with policy.
Impact of Amenity	Potential for adverse impacts can be mitigated by planning condition.

Landscape, townscape and visual impact	Unacceptable detrimental impacts contrary to the policies ENV1, ENV10 and ENV12 of the Adopted Local Plan 2015 and paragraph 127 of the NPPF.
Impact on setting of heritage assets and heritage significance	Consequent harm to heritage significance not justified nor clearly and convincingly outweighed by public benefits associated with proposed development contrary to policy ENV4 of the Adopted Local Plan and paragraph 194 of the NPPF.
Flood risk, drainage and climate impact	Unresolved surface water management issues, but climate impact adequately mitigated.

## 5. Background

- 5.1 The application subject of this report seeks planning permission for the erection of a multi storey car park and improvements to internal site roads and the temporary change of use of a former school field to car parking on land at the Dorset County Hospital, Williams Avenue, Dorchester.
- 5.2 The application is made jointly by the Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (hereafter referred to as 'the Trust') and Prime (UK) Development ('Prime').
- 5.3 The Trust is the main provider of acute hospital services in Dorset and operates the Dorset County Hospital.
- 5.4 It is understood that the Trust and Prime have established a Strategic Estates Partnership to develop new clinical and ancillary facilities within the Dorset County Hospital campus. The applicants' agent (Stripe Consulting Limited) is a multi-disciplinary design and engineering company with expertise in car park structures.
- 5.5 As presented in 2019, in addition to the requisite forms, plans, drawings and notice, the subject application was supported by:
- (i) a Planning Statement prepared by Prime;
  - (ii) a Design and Access Statement prepared by Stripe Consulting Limited;
  - (iii) a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Abbas Ecology;
  - (iv) an Arboricultural Opportunities and Constraints Assessment prepared by Barrell Tree Consultancy;
  - (v) an NPPF Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Patrick Parsons Limited;
  - (vi) a Transport Assessment, a Car Park Strategy and a Travel Plan prepared by Callidus Transport & Engineering Limited;
  - (vii) an Air Quality Assessment prepared by REC Ltd;
  - (viii) an Accurate Visual Representations report prepared by Stripe Consulting Limited;
  - (ix) a Summary Heritage Constraints Report and a Heritage Assessment prepared by Cotswold Archaeology; and
  - (x) a Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Prime.
- (i) Following discussions and correspondence with the applicants' representatives, amended plans and drawings and further supporting

- information has been provided including: an Addendum to the Design and Access Statement prepared by Stripe Consulting Limited;
- (ii) an Arboricultural Assessment and Method Statement prepared by Barrell Tree Consultancy;
  - (iii) a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan prepared and certified pursuant to the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol;
  - (iv) a Review of Heritage Consultee Comments prepared by Cotswold Archaeology;
  - (v) a Surface Water Drainage Strategy Report prepared by Stripe Consulting Limited;
  - (vi) a Drainage Strategy Report prepared by Lyons O'Neill Structural Engineers;
  - (vii) a revised and updated Travel Plan; and
  - (viii) a Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal prepared by Chartered Landscape Architects at Turley Landscape, Townscape and VIA.

5.6 Although progress have been made on a range of matters, several areas of policy conflict remain, with the conclusion having been reached that, unless significantly amended, planning permission should be refused. Having declined the opportunity to further amend the application proposal, the applicants have instead requested that the application be reported to Committee for determination.

## **6. Regulatory and Policy Context**

### Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

6.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that in dealing with an application for planning permission, the planning authority shall have regard to:

- (i) the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application;
- (ii) a post-examination draft neighbourhood development plan, so far as material to the application;
- (iii) any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and
- (iv) any other material considerations.

6.2 For the subject application, the development plan includes the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015 (the Adopted Local Plan), which provides a basis for planning decisions in former district of West Dorset for the period to 2031. The plan sets out a vision for West Dorset in 2031 and a number of strategic objectives which provide a concise expression of the priorities plan. Pertinent strategic objectives include:

- Support the local economy to provide opportunities for high quality, better paid jobs;
- Support sustainable, safe and healthy communities with accessibility to a range of services and facilities;
- Protect and enhance the outstanding natural and built environment, including its landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, and the local distinctiveness of places with the area – this will be the over-riding objective in those areas of the plan which are particularly sensitive to change;
- Reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, both by minimising the potential impacts and adapting to those that are inevitable – this will be the over-riding objective in those areas of the plan which are at highest risk;

- Provide greater opportunities to reduce car use; improve safety; ensure convenient and appropriate public transport services; and seek greater network efficiency for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians; and
  - Achieve high quality and sustainable in design, reflecting local character and distinctiveness of the area.
- 6.3 For each of the above themes, more detailed policies to be applied to specific issues or types of development are provided. The following policies are relevant to the determination of the subject application:
- INT1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development.
  - SUS2 - The Distribution of Development.
  - COM3 - New or Improved Local Community Buildings and Structures.
  - COM7 - Create a Safe and Efficient Transport System.
  - COM9 - Parking Standards in New Development.
  - COM10 - The Provision of Utilities Service Infrastructure.
  - ENV1 - Landscape, Seaside and Sites of Geological Interest.
  - ENV2 - Wildlife and Habitats.
  - ENV4 - Heritage Assets.
  - ENV5 - Flood Risk.
  - ENV9 - Pollution and Contaminated Land.
  - ENV10 - The Landscape and Townscape Setting.
  - ENV11 - The Pattern of Streets and Spaces.
  - ENV12 - The Design and Positioning of Buildings.
  - ENV13 - Achieving High Levels of Environmental Performance.
  - ENV15 - Efficient and Appropriate Use of Land.
  - ENV16 - Amenity.
- 6.4 No post-examination draft neighbourhood development plan is material to the determination of the subject application.
- 6.5 For the purpose of section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) “local finance consideration” means:
- (a) a grant or other financial assistance that has been, or will or could be, provided to a relevant authority by a Minister of the Crown, or
  - (b) sums that a relevant authority has received, or will or could receive, in payment of Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 6.6 Defined as such, there are no local finance considerations that are material to the determination of the subject application.
- 6.7 The term ‘*other material considerations*’ is wide ranging but includes the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the NPPF) which sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied and which is material to the determination of all planning applications in England. The term may further include other national, emerging and/or supplementary planning policy documents; planning practice guidance; consultation response and other representations made about an application; and/or other statutory provisions and policy statements.
- 6.8 The NPPF makes clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 9) and that achieving

sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental – these being interdependent and needing to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives (paragraph 8).

6.9 In full, the overarching objectives of the planning system are as follows:

- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

6.10 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF makes clear that the overarching objectives are not criteria against which every planning decision can or should be judged, noting that decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions but, that in doing so, should take local circumstances into account so as to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

6.11 Paragraph 38 of the NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, using the full range of planning tools available and working proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. It is further stated that decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

6.12 Paragraph 54 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations but notes that planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.

6.13 Paragraph 55 of the NPPF provides that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. It is further stated that agreeing conditions early is beneficial to all parties involved in the process and can speed up decision making and that conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided, unless there is a clear justification.

- 6.14 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF provides that planning obligations must only be sought where:
- (i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
  - (ii) directly related to the development; and
  - (iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 6.15 Other relevant parts of the NPPF referred to in this report are:
- Building a strong, competitive economy – paragraph 80.
  - Promoting sustainable transport – 108 and 110.
  - Making effective use of land – paragraphs 121-122.
  - Achieving well-designed places – paragraphs 124, 127 and 130.
  - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change – paragraphs 148, 155 and 165.
  - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – paragraphs 170, 172 and 180.
  - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – paragraphs 184, 189-190, 192-194 and 196-197.
- 6.16 In appraising the application proposal account has also been taken of the following documents:
- (i) the Dorset AONB Management Plan 2019-2025, most particularly policies C1h, C2a, C2b and C4c;
  - (ii) the Dorchester Conservation Area Appraisal Supplementary Planning Guidance document issued by the former West Dorset District Council in July 2003; and
  - (iii) the Design and Sustainable Development Planning Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document issued by the former West Dorset District Council in February 2009.
- 6.17 Other statutory provisions, requirements and duties of particular relevance to the determination of the application are summarised below.
- The Town and Country Planning Act (Environment Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) – the EIA Regulations
- 6.18 The EIA Regulations apply the amended EU directive “on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment” (usually referred to as the ‘Environmental Impact Assessment Directive’) to the planning system in England.
- 6.19 Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is a process of evaluating the main likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development and which involves the preparation of an environmental statement, its publication and consideration.
- 6.20 The EIA Regulations only apply to certain types of development and EIA is not always required for all such development. However, regulation 3 of the EIA Regulations provides that the relevant planning authority, the Secretary of State or an inspector must not grant planning permission or subsequent consent for EIA development unless an EIA has been carried out in respect of the development.

- 6.21 Submission of the subject application followed the issuing on behalf of Dorset Council of a screening opinion pursuant to the EIA Regulations indicating that environmental impact assessment would not be necessary for development at the hospital involving the erection of a multi-storey car park and improvements to internal site roads and wayfinding (Application Reference WD/D/19/001577), this being on the basis that the proposed development was not likely to have significant environmental impacts. In reaching this opinion, account was taken of representations made on behalf of Historic England and the Dorset AONB Partnership and, amongst other matters, it was noted that the site is within the built context of the settlement of Dorchester, and that:
- (i) a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which takes on board the comments from the Dorset AONB team will be required alongside the proposed development; and
  - (ii) a Heritage Impact Assessment to be agreed by Historic England and Dorset Council's Archaeologist and Conservation Officer will be required alongside the application, to ensure that residual impacts upon heritage assets are addressed.

- 6.22 In recent weeks, the Council's opinion has been questioned and the applicants have requested that the Secretary of State issue a screening direction. Such directions are determinative as to whether development is EIA development.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

- 6.23 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) provides that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 6.24 The subject development would not directly (i.e. physically) impact on any listed building but would effect the setting of a number of listed buildings. The requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed buildings is therefore of relevance and is addressed in the appraisal presented at section 11 of this report.
- 6.25 Section 69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) provides that every local planning authority:
- (a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and
  - (b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.
- 6.26 The designated Dorchester Conservation Area extends across a large part of Dorchester including a small section of the Dorset County Hospital campus, this part of the campus also being contained within the planning application site.
- 6.27 Under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) in the exercise of any functions under the Planning Acts with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall

be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

- 6.28 Although contained within the application site, no development is proposed within that part of the hospital campus that is situated within the Conservation Area. In consequence, the statutory requirement of section 72(1) is not engaged. However, the proposed development would impact on the setting of the conservation area, a matter that is addressed in the appraisal presented at section 11 of this report.

#### Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended)

- 6.29 Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) requires that in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, public bodies shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty. Impact of the proposed development on views from within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is considered within the appraisal presented in section 11 of this report.

#### Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

- 6.30 Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 places a duty on the planning authority, in considering an application for planning permission, to have regard to its effects on European protected species and section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on planning authorities to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The implications of the proposed development for biodiversity are addressed in the appraisal presented in section 11 of this report.

#### Equalities Act 2010 (as amended)

- 6.31 Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (as amended) provides that in the exercise of its functions a public authority must have due regard to the need to:
- (i) eliminate discrimination, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
  - (ii) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - (iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.32 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.33 The design and management of the built environment can create and/or reinforce bias and disadvantage. Accordingly, the equalities implications of the proposed development are addressed in the appraisal presented in section 11 of this report.

## Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention of Human Rights

- 6.34 The Human Rights Act 1998 imposes an obligation on public authorities not to act incompatibly with the European Convention on Human Rights, such that persons directly affected by the adverse effects of decisions of public authorities may be able to claim a breach of their human rights.
- 6.35 The articles/protocols of particular relevance are:
- (i) Article 6 - Right to a fair and public hearing;
  - (ii) Article 8 - Right to respect for private and family life; and
  - (iii) The First Protocol, Article 1 - Protection of Property.
- 6.36 These are qualified rights, which means that interference with them may be justified if deemed necessary in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
- 6.37 Article 1 of Protocol 1 provides that a person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions and that no-one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest.
- 6.38 The term “possessions” may include material possessions, such as property, and also planning permissions and possibly other rights. Any interference with a Convention right must be proportionate to the intended objective. This means that such an interference should be carefully designed to meet the objective in question and not be arbitrary, unfair or overly severe.
- 6.39 European case law suggests that interference with the human rights described above will only be considered to engage those Articles and thereby cause a breach of human rights where that interference is significant.
- 6.40 I am satisfied:
- (i) that the application has been subject to proper public consultation;
  - (ii) that the public have had an adequate opportunity to make representations in the normal ways; and
  - (iii) that the representations received are addressed in this report.
- 6.41 It is not considered that the proposed development would:
- (i) impact on the right to live one's personal life without unjustified interference such that Article 8 would be engaged; nor
  - (ii) unreasonably deprive any person of their right to either their peaceful enjoyment of their possessions or of their possessions.

## **7. The Application Site and Surrounding Area**

- 7.1 The application site is comprised of two parcels of land both being wholly contained within the Dorset County Hospital campus. Together, the application site areas extend to approximately 5.1 hectares.
- 7.2 The hospital campus extends to approximately 9.3 hectares and fronts Bridport Road to the north, Williams Avenue to the east and Damers Road to the south. To the

west is low-rise residential development that is accessed off Gloucester Road and Bridport Road. At present, it is understood that the campus contains approximately 937 parking spaces.

- 7.3 The hospital provides a full range of district general services including an Emergency Department (ED) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and links with satellite units in five community hospitals. It has approximately 400 beds, seven main theatres and two-day theatres. Related services are grouped into three connected wings comprising the North Wing, the South Wing and the East Wing which in this report are collectively referred to as 'the main hospital building'.
- 7.4 The Trust has a headquarter office facility fronting Bridport Road in the north-west of the campus and there are staff accommodation buildings (Dammers Court) adjacent to Dammers Road in the south. Also in the south of the campus is a self-contained Children's Centre and an associated car park adjacent to which is a former workhouse building (Dammers House) and an attached former chapel. Dammers House and the former chapel are together Grade II listed as Dammers Hospital. Dammers House is used for hospital administration and the former chapel as a day nursery.
- 7.5 Dammers Hospital lies within the designated Dorchester Conservation Area which encompasses much of Dorchester town centre, including areas to the north, east and south of the hospital campus, but which does not include any other part of the hospital campus.
- 7.6 In 2017, the Trust took occupation of the former Dammers School site which is now known as the West Annex and where former school buildings are being used for hospital administration and hard-surfaced areas are being used for vehicular parking. The former school playing field remains as an area of open (undeveloped) land. The Trust's headquarters lie to the north of the field, the main hospital building to the east, former school buildings and surfaced vehicular parking to the south and residential development to the west.
- 7.7 Vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access to the hospital campus is gained from entrances on each of its road frontages, the principal vehicular accesses being from Williams Avenue (x1) and Dammers Road (x2).
- 7.8 Having been constructed mostly in two phases of development in the 1980s and the 1990s, the main hospital building is of contemporary construction and is one of the largest and tallest buildings in Dorchester.
- 7.9 Ground levels within the hospital campus generally rise to the west and fall quite steeply from the south-eastern corner of the main hospital building to the lowest point of the campus adjacent to the junction between Dammers Road and Williams Avenue. A pedestrian route formed by a combination of sloping pathways and steps connects between the highway junction and the main hospital building, the Children's Centre lying to the west and a balancing pond and areas of staff and patient parking to the east.
- 7.10 This pedestrian route and the adjacent parking areas are contained within the larger parcel of land comprised in the application site which extends to approximately 4.4 hectares. The parcel further includes hospital roadways, surface level parking and

associated paths and landscaping situated to the south and east of the main hospital building, the East Wing and various other hospital buildings including the Children's Centre, Damers Court and Damers House.

- 7.11 The smaller parcel of land contained within the application site comprises approximately 0.73 ha of land in the West Annex including existing roadways, hard surfaced areas currently used for vehicular parking and much of the former school playing field.
- 7.12 Building heights vary across the campus with the tallest elements being set back from the highway frontages. Levels information provided in the application indicate the following relative heights above datum (AD).
- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| • Pavement at Williams Avenue and Damers Road junction | 71.00 metres AD  |
| • Top of pedestrian route adjacent to East Wing        | 84.44 metres AD  |
| • Ridge of Damers' House roof                          | 87.07 metres AD  |
| • Ridge of Children's Centre roof                      | 84.45 metres AD  |
| • Ridge of East Wing roof                              | 98.73 metres AD  |
| • Ridge of South Wing roof                             | 102.32 metres AD |
- 7.13 Due to its size, height and relatively elevated position within the town, parts of the main hospital building are visible from a wide range of locations both within and beyond Dorchester.
- 7.14 Residential properties and a public house (the Sydney Arms) that are located along the north side of Bridport Road and which are situated within the Dorchester Conservation Area are situated to the north of application site. The Grade II listed Dorchester Military Museum is located further along Bridport Road to the east approximately 190 metres from the application site boundary and is also within the designated Conservation Area. A roof level viewing platform at the museum affords panoramic views across the town including a largely uninterrupted view towards the hospital campus.
- 7.15 The north west block of the former infantry barracks and the Bridport Road Water Tower (both Grade II listed) are also to north and a similar distance from the application site boundary.
- 7.16 To the east of Williams Avenue is the Bristol to Weymouth railway line which is in cutting as it passes beneath Bridport Road but on embankment as it approaches the Grade II listed Dorchester West Railway Station, where the platforms and railway bridge over Damers Road. At their nearest points, both station platforms are less than 50 metres from the application site. The footbridge connecting the platforms is approximately 80 metres from the application site. The station platforms and connecting footbridge each afford views towards the main hospital building, the bridge and eastern platform being partly within Conservation Area.

- 7.17 Between Williams Avenue and the railway are a number of trees and a well-vegetated embankment. With further shrubs and trees located along the hospital campus road frontage, Williams Avenue has an attractive, verdant character and, together with the railway, provides a strong edge to the Dorchester Conservation Area.
- 7.18 Beyond the railway is an area of residential development, Borough Gardens (a Grade II Registered Park and Garden) and the core retail area of Dorchester town centre. The housing, park and vast majority of the town centre are contained within the Conservation Area.
- 7.19 To the south of the application site on the opposite side of Damers Road are a number of residential and commercial properties, some of which are contained within the designated Conservation Area.
- 7.20 The streets to the south of the application site accommodate mostly relatively low (mainly two, some three storey), domestic scale buildings arranged in a fairly regimented, densely packed planform.
- 7.21 Opposite Williams Avenue between Alexandra Road and the Dorchester West Railway Station is the Georgie Porgie public house, formerly the Cornwall Hotel, which is identified as a key building in the the Dorchester Conservation Area Appraisal. The Grade II\* St Mary's Church which is situated at the top of Alexandra Road, approximately 220 metres from the hospital campus and the chapel of Damers hospital are also identified as significant buildings in the Conservation Area Appraisal, the latter being noted as being of architectural and social history interest.
- 7.22 Alexandra Road rises quite steeply from Damers Road and affords some partial views northwards towards and beyond the hospital campus. Pedestrian access to and egress from the station is available adjacent to the Georgie Porgie via a pathway that affords relatively unobstructed views across Damers Road towards the hospital campus, the view being mostly of trees with glimpses of the main hospital building beyond.

#### Planning History

- 7.23 Since the modern hospital opened as the West Dorset County Hospital in the late 1980s, numerous applications have been made for minor alterations, building extensions, temporary facilities and new builds for medical services within the hospital campus. Notable recent applications include:
- (i) WD/D/17/002700: Change of use of former school (D1) to offices (B1), with associated car parking and cycle parking provision. Access improvements. Permission granted subject to conditions, 10 January 2018.
  - (ii) WD/D/16/000304: Construction of a new standalone radiotherapy suite consisting of two LINAC treatment bunkers, ancillary clinical and staff accommodation. Resurfacing adjacent car park, associated external works including lightweight covered walkway to connect to Dorset County Hospital main building. Replacement of the existing medical records store as the

enabling phase of the works on the existing staff car park adjacent to Hydrotherapy. Permission granted subject to conditions, 28 June 2016.

- 7.24 The removal of six of trees, located close to the junction of Williams Avenue and Damers Road has been approved as part of a proposal for the construction of a new step free access from Williams Avenue to Platform 1 (the western most platform) of Dorchester West Railway Station (Application Ref. WD/D/19/000366).

## **8. Proposed Development**

- 8.1 In brief outline, the application proposes:
- (i) the construction of a multi storey car park that would provide 654 parking spaces across 7 split-level decks, including 12 equipped electrical vehicle (EV) charging spaces and a further 58 spaces with provision for active or passive EV charging;
  - (ii) alterations to the Williams Avenue access and egress, including the widening of the existing junction and hospital roadway and the installation of vehicular entry and exit control barriers;
  - (iii) the installation of vehicular entry and exit control barriers in the Children's Centre car park;
  - (iv) the installation of vehicular entry and exit control barriers within the hospital campus close to the Accident & Emergency Department;
  - (v) other minor alterations to the hospital's internal road network and existing parking areas including:
    - improvements to the blue badge and patient drop off areas including the provision of additional disabled spaces, and
    - improvements to motorcycle and bicycle parking areas;
  - (vi) installation of a new vehicular parking management system; and
  - (vii) the temporary use of land in the West Annex for vehicular parking providing 164 additional spaces to enable construction of the multi storey car park.
- 8.2 In conjunction with the above, additional wayfinding improvements including new and replacement signage would be implemented at key locations across the hospital campus.
- 8.3 The multi storey car park would be constructed on sloping ground in the south-eastern corner of the hospital campus between the Children's Centre and Williams Avenue replacing existing surface level spaces, associated landscaping and a surface water balancing pond. The new car park would be broadly rectilinear in plan form with service cores on the northern face and on south-western corner of the building and would be aligned on a broadly north-west to south-east axis.
- 8.4 The northern end of the building would be cut into the ground to a depth of approximately one storey, with an engineered platform and sloping embankment constructed to the south.
- 8.5 The existing pedestrian route that connects between Damers Road and the main hospital building would be reconfigured to accommodate the new building and maintain the existing pedestrian connection.
- 8.6 At their closest points, external walls would be positioned approximately:

- 3 metres from the pavement in Williams Avenue;
  - 22 metres from the pavement in Damers Road;
  - 2.5 metres from the Children's Centre; and
  - 40 metres from the main hospital building (East Wing).
- 8.7 It is understood that approximately 89 trees within the hospital campus were felled earlier this in readiness for the proposed development but that no further felling would be necessary.
- 8.8 Accordingly, the intention is that remaining trees in the south-eastern corner of the campus and along the Williams Avenue frontage would be retained. The planting of 5 trees (2 Oak and 3 Acers) is proposed to reinforce the existing tree belt along the Williams Avenue frontage.
- 8.9 Vehicular access would be to the lowest deck on the north-eastern side of the car park with vehicular egress being from one level above to the northwest. Soft landscaping including tree and hedgerow planting is proposed between the proposed entrance roadway and the proposed building.
- 8.10 Pedestrian access and egress would be via the service cores with connections to the re-constructed pedestrian route. The northern core closest to the main hospital building would incorporate a stairway and two lifts, the southern core a stairway and one lift. more convenient provision being proposed and already existing closer to main hospital entrance, no disabled parking spaces are proposed within the multi storey car park.
- 8.11 A substation and generator would be installed between the proposed car park and the existing Children's Centre car park, the equipment being sited on concrete bases and contained within single-storey brickwork and carbon steel enclosures respectively.
- 8.12 If permitted, aspects of the detailed design of proposed car park would be confirmed by means of pre-commencement approvals, but as detailed in the application the proposal provides for:
- (i) a plinth constructed in metal gabions filled with local stone;
  - (ii) use of perforated metal panels with a non-reflective finish and neutral colour (probably pale grey/silver) on the external elevations, the perforations incorporating artwork to soften the appearance of the northern, eastern and southern faces of the building – the artwork designed so as to have plainer perforation designs located to the upper storeys of the building, so that the design would be recessive in longer distance views whilst introducing visual interest when seen in close proximity;
  - (iii) rendered service cores to be finished in neutral/muted colours to complement the main façades and artwork and limit prominence in distant views;
  - (iv) a green climbing wall system on sections of the lower storeys of the north-eastern and south-eastern elevations where there is relatively limited opportunity for additional ground-based planting to further screen/filter public views of the building;
  - (v) a variable roofline (parapet) profile to produce a varied skyline to help break up the massing of the built form;

- (vi) use of sensor lighting and modern LED fittings to limit impact on dark night skies;
  - (vii) built-in sparrow terraces, bee blocks and bird boxes; and
  - (viii) landscaping including native shrub planting, new native tree planting in existing tree belts, a wildflower lawn area alongside the vehicular access road, and the removal of exotic shrubs alongside Williams Avenue and their replacement with tussock grassland where practical.
- 8.13 The application makes clear that subject development proposals represent the first steps in a wider masterplan vision for the hospital campus and identifies two main strands to the proposals. First, current pressure and issues caused by the number of parking spaces available and the physical layout of the hospital and second, the future strategic need to improve and expand the clinical services at the hospital to meet the needs of the patients and communities that the hospital serves.
- 8.14 It is explained that existing parking provision within the hospital site presents issues for staff, patients and visitors including confusion, uncertainty and delay with considerable costs associated with missed appointments and payment for extended parking periods and further explained that the proposed improvements would benefit all local residents in and around Dorchester and across the county.
- 8.15 The Transport Assessment submitted in support of the application records that:
- “The planning application is for new parking and wayfinding arrangements at DCH in Dorchester. A new permanent multi-storey car park (MSCP) to be submitted by the Trust will underpin the delivery of the Hospital’s strategic aims. The number of parking spaces in the new car park will enable the overall parking provision at the Hospital to be increased. This will help to address the current chronic under provision at the Hospital and to allow for the future growth in Hospital services.”
- (Transport Assessment, paragraph 1.2.1)
- 8.16 Details of the Trust’s masterplan are provided within the application, the plan and accompanying details illustrating a number of potential development projects including:
- (i) provision an Integrated Community and Primary Care Services Hub;
  - (ii) expansion for the Emergency Department and Intensive Care Unit;
  - (iii) better use of West Annex (former Dames School site) and Trust HQ sites;
  - (iv) improvements to the elective surgery and day surgery facilities and Private Patients Treatment Centre (PPTC);
  - (v) main entrance improvements;
  - (vi) new Trust office space;
  - (vii) provision for a reablement facility;
  - (viii) extension of the Renal Department;
  - (ix) residential units to benefit Trust employees and other key workers; and
  - (x) specialist housing such as extra care living.
- 8.17 It is indicated that the application proposals, including the proposed multi storey car park, are essential to unlock space within the hospital estate which is currently taken up by land-hungry vehicular parking and the only way in which the Trust can successfully move forward to free up the land required on which to create any new

facilities, while still allowing patients, staff and visitors to easily access the site. The proposals are therefore presented as the enabler of the wider master-planned development and necessary to facilitate much needed clinical improvements.

- 8.18 It is further stated that:

"At this stage, the approach to parking on site is to consolidate the parking spaces required for the existing clinical services, which will lead to on site vehicle and wayfinding improvements.

A series of alternatives, including several smaller car parks around the hospital, have been considered. However, each would compromise the masterplan and/or the simplified approach to wayfinding and vehicle movements."

"The parking requirements for the proposed uses that will be delivered by the masterplan have not yet been calculated. These will be considered as each individual project comes forward in time."

(Planning Statement, page 11)

- 8.19 Referring to the existing parking provision at the hospital, the submitted Car Parking Strategy notes that:

"A review of the layout shows that these different types of spaces are dispersed across the site in a variety of locations. The current parking layout is convoluted and unclear, leading to a confusing experience for Hospital users wishing to park on site. The current arrangement means that vehicles must circulate the site in search of spaces, which often leads to internal queuing at peak times. This has a knock-on effect of late and missed appointments as well as unnecessary stress to Hospital users if they cannot easily find anywhere to park."

(Car Park Strategy, paragraph 2.2.3)

## **9. Consultee Responses**

- 9.1 The views of a number statutory and non-statutory consultees have been sought on the application and proposed development. Those consulted are listed below, together with an outline summary of any response received.

### **9.2 Dorset Council Ward Members**

No response received.

### **9.3 Dorchester Town Council**

No objection in principle. Welcome efforts of applicant to work with planning authority. Felt strongly that multi storey carpark should meet needs of hospital and should not be expected to meet needs of nearby residential streets. Hoped that other measures could be incorporated in design to mitigate fumes and felt crucial that hospital's plans to encourage and implement green travel proceed. Concerned about environmental impact from removal of existing trees and hoped a tree planting

scheme would be incorporated into plan to include more established trees which would also mitigate any loss of existing views.

#### **9.4 Dorset Council Highway Liaison Engineer**

Having initially requested further information regarding the entry barrier proposed for the Williams Avenue access and cyclist access arrangements, further information has been provided regarding the operation of the barrier and the potential for vehicles queueing at the access. Comment that:

Comment that further information has provided greater clarity on operation of barrier and likely impact on flows of traffic accessing the site. Given expected trip rates and worst-case scenario barrier delay, now considered that barriers should function without significant adverse impact on adjacent public highway. Further information/confirmation on how appropriate cycle access to hospital will be achieved is awaited but could be secured by means of planning condition.

#### **9.5 Dorset Council Sustainable Travel Team**

In response to the application as initially presented, concern expressed that proposed car park would not solve existing issues of parking and access. Noted that:

- (i) proposals would further increase amount of traffic through town, contrary to wider aspirations for traffic reduction and improved access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users;
- (ii) additional car parking should be considered after all other options have been exhausted, but not before and that doing otherwise is contrary to recommended approach of situating the Car Parking Strategy within context of overall access strategy for site, taking account of all users and all modes as recommended by Department for Transport and the NHS.

Further noted that proposal shows little attention to NHS' commitment to reducing travel impacts on communities and promoting active travel and that site is well served by public transport, yet potential to encourage more staff to use these options has not been developed.

Whilst not objecting to the application, considered that significant changes necessary to the proposed Travel Plan and Car Parking Management Strategy.

Further comments in response to the revised Travel Plan are awaited.

#### **9.6 Network Rail**

No observations or comment.

#### **9.7 Dorset Council Rights of Way / Countryside Access**

No response received.

#### **9.8 Environment Agency**

No response received.

## **9.9 Dorset Council Flood Risk Management Team**

Having initially objected to surface water drainage proposals because submitted surface water drainage strategy had not been fully substantiated and did not conform to national planning policy with respect to achieving multifunctional benefit, through delivery of Sustainable Drainage Systems, following submission of further information that is still being considered, it is expected that outstanding issues may be resolved and/or could be addressed by condition.

## **9.10 Dorset Council Environmental Health**

Public Health's records indicate that proposed development lies on a site with a historical and potentially contaminative land use. Condition recommended. Further recommended:

- (i) that proposed light attenuation measures be secured by condition;
- (ii) consideration be given to noise impact of any plant; and
- (iii) construction management controls be secured by condition.

## **9.11 Dorset Council Technical Services**

Note that site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of fluvial flooding). Recommend consultation and liaison with DC Flood Risk Management Team.

## **9.12 Wessex Water**

No response received.

## **9.13 Scottish and Southern Energy**

No response received.

## **9.14 Historic England**

### Initial Response of 04 December 2019

Noted that:

- (i) All photographs and photo-visualisations/montages illustrate summertime foliage and that this may give a somewhat misleading impression of visual prominence of proposed multi storey car park at other times of year when screening provided by trees will be much less effective.
- (ii) Bulk and massing of car park will make it highly visible where it is not screened by trees or other buildings, and few other buildings in vicinity will be of a size that could effectively screen its height when viewed in close proximity.
- (iii) Hard to see how views towards multi storey car park from within adjacent Conservation Area (which contains buildings of Victorian/Edwardian suburbs that are largely of a domestic scale) could fail to be affected, particularly during winter months.
- (iv) Whilst hospital site already contains some bulky modern buildings, these are not so close to Conservation Area boundary.
- (v) Less persuaded than applicant's heritage consultant that change in view arising from introduction of a building of height, bulk and relatively monolithic

- design proposed will not cause a degree of harm to setting of Conversation Area and also to some Grade II listing buildings within or just outside it.
- (vi) Beyond Conservation Area, concerned about impact on setting of Neolithic Henge (Maumbury Rings) which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Setting of monument contains a range of built development, but scale, massing and design of car park will potentially make it more visually prominent than other modern buildings which are visible from the monument. Building will also impact on longer-range views of Dorchester town which are widely obtained, including from a number of important scheduled ancient monuments which encircle the town such as the hill forts of Poundbury and Maiden Castle. Whilst site forms a relatively small portion of the setting of these monuments in the panoramic views that are obtained from them, Dorchester itself is regarded as forming an important part of the overall setting, such that any new buildings whose massing, bulk and monolithic form are dominant to the point where it draws the eye as an incongruous element in the skyline of the town, could be considered to cause some harm to the experience of the monuments which its setting provides.

Further commented that:

"We appreciate that there will be a public benefit provided by the creation of additional car parking for the hospital, and anticipate that that will carry considerable weight as a justification for the building in the planning process. However, we would advise your Authority to give serious thought to measures which could reduce the visual impact of the car park on its surroundings. This might be achieved by further modulating and refining its design to reduce its monolithic character, and the impression of unrelieved bulk and massing which the drawings convey. A review of the buildings by the County's Design Review Panel could be helpful in that process."

"Historic England has concerns regarding the application of heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 190, 193, 194 and 196 and the NPPF. .... "

#### Further Response of 20 July 2020

Noted that no significant amendments made to design of proposed 7 storey car park, but that additional information provided.

Comment that, on the whole, would not disagree with conclusions of submitted Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal on likely visibility, but in relation to assets such as Maiden Castle, consider the degree of change to be somewhat higher than the report concludes. Further commented that:

"The height, bulk and unrelieved massing of the car park are a noticeably different form to other large buildings in the hospital site, and this is what could cause some harm to the setting of the conservation area and Maiden Castle, judging by the views that have been provided."

No change to overall conclusion previously set out. Advise that Authority should satisfy itself that any potential harm to significance of heritage assets has been minimised as far as possible and that the resulting harm is unavoidable in order to deliver the public benefits of the development, as any heritage harm has to be clearly justified.

#### 9.15 **Ancient Monuments Society**

No response.

#### 9.16 **Dorset Council Senior Conservation and Design Officer**

##### Initial Response of 04 March 2020

Commented that:

- (i) The pure unrelenting massing, form and scale sit uncomfortably in this exposed and key location and compete unashamedly with the important historic features of Dorchester skyline.
- (ii) Close proximity to residential areas results in an overpowering intrusion into tight knit streets of Conservation Area, in conflict with human scale and special character.
- (iii) Concern for long range views , which will be compromised by further interjection of high rise structures.
- (iv) Submission does not appear to provide evidence of Options Appraisal as regards assessment of alternative schemes and their impact on the various heritage assets to justify proposed approach and location.
- (v) The heritage assessment appears to suggest that former erosion of setting, or asset itself, dilutes need for safeguarding, rather than enhances need to recognise its evidential value and avoid cumulative erosion.

Further commented that:

“... the uncommon openness of character at road junction adjacent to site provides clear public views on all approaches on foot and by vehicle, and from both the listed station’s platform and steps, and the Alexandra Street gateway. Clear views will also be present from the listed Damer’s Hospital, across the carpark; from the Sydney Arms junction, as well as on descending Alexandra Road from the Grade II\* church, being sited on high ground. The latter provides views of the proposed development juxtaposed with the listed Military Hospital and water tower.

From the junctions of Great West Road with Cornwall Road and Victoria Road there are sightlines to the proposed development, the latter two again gateways to the Conservation Area’s historic suburbs. Furthermore, from within the designated area, multiple viewpoints exist (ie: Cornwall Road, St Helens Road, Victoria Road,) via gaps in the building line or above ridge lines. In the case of the latter, the large curtain wall will constitute a substantially intrusive and dominating over-bearing presence, appearing completely out of context in terms of form and finish, with the historic human form of the housing and their subtle material palette. Wider views reveal that its scale and

massing will also impact detrimentally on the wider views of the relatively uniform and replicated historic roofscape.”

“Overall, the scheme is not considered to preserve or enhance the setting of the Conservation Area, appearing out of context, nor to safeguard the significance of the listed buildings or SAMs [Scheduled Ancient Monuments] identified, and in some cases it seriously erodes their setting. Great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets and to development delivering a positive contribution or better revealing the significance of heritage assets. As such, the present development scheme is not considered to have successfully responded to the setting and is considered to constitute less than substantial harm, which is not the same as acceptable harm. Despite public benefit it is considered that alternative schemes have potential to offer less impact and as such in this specific instance the harm is not sufficiently outweighed or justified.”

#### Further Response of 06 August 2020

Comments that key points raised at both pre-app and in previous consultation response cannot be considered to have been addressed or taken on board. Further comments that:

“The proposed multi-storey building was of major concern from the pre-app stage, and this has been consistently expressed in the feedback from officers, as regard scale and massing, and visual impact on heritage assets and being weak as regards its justification, in that it was not presented as part of a comprehensive masterplan for the site, but rather in a somewhat isolated form, which lacked a strong evidence base to support its scale, design and location.”

“It is acknowledged that some further work has been done in regard to the artwork images to be used on the external skin, in an attempt to try and mitigate the building’s scale and mass. The use of landscape images may in principle have potential to create some visual softening of surface area impact, and provide some connection with any landscape/tree planted buffer zone around it, although the depth of such a buffer to all sides appears from the proposed landscape plan to be constrained along the long SW elevation’s junction with existing car parking. ...”

“Furthermore, the extent of the curtain wall surface area in question is considerable, especially facing Damer Road and the Grade II listed former hospital. Therefore, the sole use of optical illusion is not considered to outweigh the resulting dominating presence that will still be clearly visible from these viewpoints or the narrow streets within the Conservation Area.”

“It is acknowledged that not all change to the setting of a Conservation Area is harmful, indeed Historic England’s definition of conservation is the “management of change”. However, in this specific case and as advised previously, the present development scheme is not considered to have successfully responded to the setting or fully assessed the significance of the numerous designated and undesignated heritage assets. Under the NPPF

Chapter 16, great weight is required to be given to such and for development to deliver a positive contribution or better reveal their significance.”

“Although the proposed multi-storey building is described as having a relationship with the already established large hospital building, in contrast, the latter has a much more diverse appearance with its variation of form and height, which breaks up its massing and impact and has a far more set back, recessive position. It is considered that the scheme has failed to recognise the value placed on the experience of the approach into the Conservation Area, and as such, the introduction of the proposed large scale structure of such unrelenting solidity and large dimensions in close proximity to the Conservation Area gateway, impacts detrimentally on the historic environment and the revisions are not considered to have overcome the resulting less-than-substantial harm.”

#### **9.17 DC Historic Environment Team - Senior Archaeologist**

On basis of submitted Heritage Assessment and own knowledge of site, considers that impact on below-ground archaeology is not a constraint that need to be taken in to account in determination of this application.

#### **9.18 Sport England**

No objection. As replacement for former school playing field has already been delivered, considered that Sport England policy exemption E4 applies.

#### **9.19 Natural England**

The application has not been assessed by Natural England.

#### **9.20 DC Natural Environment Team**

No response received.

#### **9.21 Dorset AONB Partnership**

##### Initial Response of 20 February 2020

Considered that development of scale and massing proposed would have some adverse landscape and visual effects on the AONB but given their nature and the distance of the views that these are likely to be ‘Low Adverse’. Comment that ‘localised effects’ are likely to be Significant and Adverse.

Consider there is potential for adverse effect on special quality of AONB (dark night skies) owing to cumulative effects of new lighting required for the multi storey car park being seen in combination with existing site provision. Noted that details of lighting are not provided within the supporting documents and that adverse effects on the Special Qualities of the AONB are addressed by Policy C2e of the AONB Management Plan, which states that:

“The conservation and enhancement of the AONB’s special qualities will be a significant consideration in the planning balance.”

### Further Response of 21 July 2020

Comment that proposed development will lead to Adverse landscape and visual effects on the AONB – but that these are likely to be Low Adverse given nature and distance of the views.

Further comment that ‘localised effects’ are likely to be Significant and Adverse.

“It remains the case that MSCP will entail the removal of existing strategic landscaping – and offers little in the way of compensatory planting. The sheer scale of the building will be impossible to mitigate through soft landscaping alone – and the design of the elevations is key in assisting in its assimilation into this sensitive setting. With a proposal of this scale and massing – permanent adverse visual effects are likely.

The Proposed Site Sections illustrate the dominance of the Building in terms of relative height to existing trees and buildings. Trees will only filter views of the lower half of the structure.

Sustainability: Whilst not strictly within the remit of these observations – there is a general concern that the development of a MSCP within this location will fail to provide a long-term solution to the parking problems across this Site given the wider aspirations expressed through the masterplan. Alternative opportunities for staff and visitor travel do not appear to have been considered. The development of the MSCP has the potential to significantly, and permanently, affect the townscape and landscape and I would advise that these effects have not been adequately assessed and presented within this Application.”

### **9.22 Dorset Council Senior Landscape Architect**

#### Initial Response of 02 March 2020

Expressed concern that presented visual representations do not comply with standard guidance produced by Landscape Institute and that visual representations do not illustrate the scenario during either the winter or at night-time. Further noted that:

- (i) the hospital site is significantly higher than Dorchester town centre such that the hospital buildings are visible on the skyline in a number of important vistas and views from within the town, and most especially from within the Conservation Area, and proposed development would impact on the setting of a number of designated heritage assets; and
- (ii) concurs with Historic England’s concerns regarding bulk and massing;
- (iii) proposed multi storey car park would impact significantly on townscape and its design must respond sensitively to context.

Concluded that full landscape and visual impact assessment needs to be undertaken and that the siting and design of multi storey car park should be guided by outcome of assessment and suitable mitigation measures suggested with the efficacy of that mitigation fully appraised.

## Further Response of 07 August 2020

In response to the further supporting information, noted that the Dorset AONB Team has supplied comments indicating that the landscape impact will be low, but nonetheless adverse, and significant given the AONB designation. Noted that identified cumulative impact has not been assessed. Further noted that:

- (i) the existing hospital buildings already impact on the character of the Dorchester Conservation Area where the Conservation Area wraps around the south-eastern corner of the hospital and that the proposals would significantly exacerbate this already uncomfortable relationship;
- (ii) again noted that submitted appraisal does not address cumulative impact in respect of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area; and
- (iii) not satisfied that mitigation measures suggested would reduce impact of proposals to an acceptable degree.

Overall, considers impact of proposals on townscape character, and particularly that of heritage assets/setting of heritage assets to be moderate/severe adverse, and that the proposed mitigation measures will not reduce the impact to a level that is acceptable.

In relation to visual impacts, noted that impact on views from AONB will be low, but adverse, and again significant given the AONB designation and cumulative impact.

Further noted that proposed development would also be visible from sensitive visual receptors outside AONB most notably bridleways and footpaths to west of B3143 Slyer's Lane between Cokers Frome and Waterston. Impact from these rights of way would again be low/adverse, but significance not as for AONB.

Within the settlement boundary, noted that there is inter-visibility between the proposals and key landmark sites, the majority of which are important listed buildings and monuments. Perhaps more importantly, there are key viewpoints within the town where the multi storey car park would be visible on skyline along with historic landmark buildings (e.g. form the Dorchester Military Museum and the chimney of Eldridge Pope Brewery – both Grade II listed landmark buildings).

Considers that submitted Appraisal considerably underplays the significance of visual impact of proposals, most especially because reference is drawn to proposals not looking out of character when viewed in context of the existing hospital buildings. However, no consideration is given to fact that these buildings in themselves have a negative impact especially when viewed in context of the Dorchester Conservation Area from Damers Road. Further states that:

“It is my opinion that the cumulative impact of the proposals along with the existing hospital buildings is severe adverse , reducing to moderate adverse on implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. The magnitude of change in views will be high, due to the scale and mass of the MSCP, its functional appearance, and its close proximity to sensitive visual receptors (pedestrians) and residential properties. This and the fact that the greatest impact will be observed from the Conservation Area mean that these adverse visual effects will be significant.”

Concludes that proposed development will have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of Dorchester Conservation Area and on important views from within the town and that cumulative impact of proposals in combination with the existing hospital buildings increases significance of these adverse effects. Noted that proposed mitigation measures will help to reduce impact but will nevertheless still be significant and adverse.

Further states that does not consider that the development will:

- add to the overall quality of the area
- be visually attractive or sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting
- take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area
- sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets
- make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness
- relate positively to adjoining buildings and other features that contribute to the character of the area

and cannot therefore support application because it does not comply with the requirements of paragraphs 127, 130 and 192 of the NPPF or Policies ENV4, ENV10 and ENV12 of the Adopted Local Plan.

#### **9.23 DC Conservation – Senior Tree Officer**

No response received.

#### **9.24 DC Commercial Housing**

No response received.

#### **9.25 Dorset Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser**

No objections.

#### **9.26 DC Spatial Planning – Environmental Assessment Officer**

No response received

### **10. Publicity and Other Representations Received**

10.1 The application was advertised in the local press and by site notice and notification letters were sent to 104 properties. In addition to the consultation responses summarised above, representations about the application have been received from and/or on behalf:

- (i) NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group;
- (ii) the Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust;
- (iii) the Royal Bournemouth & Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust;
- (iv) Public Health Dorset; and
- (v) 36 other respondents, 6 objecting, 24 in support and 6 expressing support or not objecting but noting concerns and/or other matters.

10.2 The representations received are summarised below.

## **10.2 NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group**

Strongly urge support for application which is a vital first step in bringing to reality a once-in-lifetime opportunity to invest £62.5 million in hospital greatly improving local services for generations to come. Further comment that:

- (i) plans will significantly expand hospital's Emergency Department (ED) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and create an Integrated Care Hub on the Dorset County Hospital site in Dorchester - improving healthcare services for our population;
- (ii) Emergency Department (ED) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) have been a key part of the COVID-19 response, being temporarily expanded during the pandemic;
- (iii) this is a vital investment to secure future of hospital for a generation to come and support our hardworking NHS staff with very best facilities and additional space to serve our community;
- (iv) part of a long-term project to deliver the recommendations of Dorset's clinically-led plans under the Clinical Services Review, to ensure continued and sustainable services for the west of the county;
- (v) to enable investment to take place and for this essential development to take place, a new multi storey car park is required to free up space for the construction, make up for lost spaces, and improve parking for visitors, staff and patients;
- (vi) the hospital is committed to green travel and at the same time ensuring that people can access the hospital; and
- (vii) if planning consent is not granted then this important project to invest in our local hospital and NHS will be delayed.

## **10.3 The Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal Bournemouth & Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

The Hospital Trusts submit that the proposed developments:

- (i) will support Dorset wide NHS health improvements and are in line with the wider strategy for Health and Care Services;
- (ii) provide for enabling work required for Dorset County Hospital to meet the increasing demand for NHS services and to continue to provide high quality patient care for the patients in West Dorset;
- (iii) will enable Dorset County Hospital to be positioned to support the recommendations of the Dorset Clinical Services Review which will help ensure high quality NHS services across Dorset and for the people and patients of Dorset;
- (iv) will facilitate the development of an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) which from experience during the Covid-19 pandemic is an important resource which has clinical support as well as an expanded Emergency Department and the creation of an Integrated Care Hub that will deliver care closer to home for residents in Dorchester and the surrounding areas.

## **10.4 Bridport Town Council**

Bridport Town Council expresses strong support for the application, noting that:

- (i) the hospital has been allocated £62.5 million of funding for essential clinical expansion;

- (ii) a multi storey car park is a necessarily utilitarian model, but applicants have done all they reasonably can to mitigate the impact on Conservation Area and it is only viable, practical option available to create crucial space for expansion;
- (iii) if plans are not approved, hospital will not be able to continue to next phase which is to build a new emergency department and intensive care unit;
- (iv) plans are paramount to future expansion for which one-off funding has been allocated and which the National Health Infrastructure Plan considers to be a priority;
- (v) the emergency department was originally built for 22,000 attendances and is seeing close to 50,000 attendances per year, so is already more than 50% under capacity for present population;
- (vi) urgent need for expansion is set to intensify with closure of Poole Hospital emergency department and maternity unit and with the vast new housing developments planned in West Dorset.

Further stated that the Town Council considers that concerns expressed by heritage and conservation consultees have been adequately addressed and that proposed development will have less impact on Conservation Area and heritage assets than existing and other planned urban sprawl and would not support Conservation Officer's opinion that the project represents an 'overpowering intrusion' into an already urban area.

The Town Council agrees with Cotswold Archaeology that any potential heritage harm presented by this project are heavily outweighed by the fact that these 'changes are demonstrably necessary to make the place sustainable' and 'to meet an overriding public policy objective or need' and hoped that all Planning Committee members will be able to see that the application is about the future of the hospital in Dorchester and that the 'greater public benefit' for all communities in West Dorset, will outweigh any objection.

## 10.5 Individual Representations in Support

The 24 additional respondents supporting the proposed development variously note:

- (i) Proposed car park would be of great benefit to hospital patients, visitors and staff.
- (ii) Proposed multi storey car park is an essential pre-requisite to free-up space for further development.
- (iii) Proposed multi storey car park will improve experience of patients, visitors and staff.
- (iv) Parking problems cause enormous stress, particularly to patients and visitors.
- (v) Hospital capacity has been totally exceeded by demands of local and tourist population.
- (vi) Demand for parking spaces has increased enormously with increasing population.
- (vii) Many patients struggle to find spaces in time for appointments.
- (viii) Parking is needed because much of Dorset is not adequately served by public transport, with driving only practical option.
- (ix) NHS staff forced to walk long distances during unsocial hours and in bad weather.
- (x) Local residents complain about impact of off-site parking.

- (xi) Proposed site is at lowest point of hospital, so will have less visual impact than other locations. Building will nestle into hill.
- (xii) Existing hospital buildings very tall.
- (xiii) Proposed multi storey car park will not have a negative visual impact nor be detrimental to surrounding area.
- (xiv) Car park is essential in order for hospital to keep up with demand for health services.
- (xv) Closure of Poole Hospital will increase pressure on the County Hospital.
- (xvi) Extra space will be need to deal with continuing demands of COVID-19.
- (xvii) New arrangements will ensure car park users are paying correct charges and will allow concessions to be managed in a consistent manner.
- (xviii) Permit holder only parking should be introduced with the new car park to assist emergency vehicles, residents and other road users.
- (xix) Staff parking in surrounding streets frequently abused by residents and there have been multiple incidents of malicious damage to vehicles.
- (xx) Trust has implemented measures to encourage walking and cycling.
- (xxi) Suggested Park & Ride and/or shuttle bus not feasible for many patients and staff.

## 10.6 Individual Objections

The 6 additional respondents objecting to the proposed development variously note:

- (i) Priority should be given vital members of the DCH workforce but that the solution is not in constructing a concrete, multistorey eyesore which will inevitably result in the degradation of the local environment;
- (i) Proposed multi storey car park would be an eyesore, intrusive and out of character with local area.
- (ii) Multi storey car park will fundamentally change the character of local area and be an eyesore.
- (iii) Inappropriate development so close to designated Conservation Area.
- (iv) Car park will dwarf building in local area.
- (v) Structure need to be much lower so as not to dominate surrounding area.
- (vi) Car park is unfit for future requirements even before it is built.
- (vii) Previous applications have made great play of landscaping, preserving the natural feel of what had previously been green fields and allotments.  
Proposal discards previous design measures.
- (viii) Proposals do not meet either short or longer term parking requirements.
- (ix) Application falls to provide thorough/meaningful comparative analysis of all options.
- (x) Car parking could be provided in other parts of hospital site.
- (xi) Use should be made of land at former Damers School.
- (xii) More than one car park could be constructed.
- (xiii) COVID emergency has demonstrated that more parking is not necessary.
- (xiv) Park and Ride would provide a longer term solution.
- (xv) Sustainable travel options would promote physical activity and help address climate change.
- (xvi) Provision should be made for walking, cycling and patient drop-off.
- (xvii) Construction of Children's Centre led to damage of local properties.
- (xviii) Public announcements have been clear that this will only meet short term needs and in long run will need park and ride.

- (xix) Use of playing field for parking will harm biodiversity.
- (xx) Use of playing field for parking will be to detriment of health and amenity.
- (xxi) COVID emergency has demonstrated importance of open space to mental health of hospital staff.
- (xxii) Providing more parking spaces will encourage more people to drive rather than use more sustainable alternatives.
- (xxiii) Considerable opposition was expressed at public meeting.
- (xxiv) Money should be spent on sustainable transport.
- (xxv) Shuttle bus service should be provided.
- (xxvi) Car park is a 1980s solution that does not respond to either climate change or health issues associated with obesity.
- (xxvii) Trees have been felled without the application being determined.
- (xxviii) Loss of trees will harm biodiversity.
- (xxix) Pollution and climate change is a significant public health risk.

## 10.7 Other Representations

The 6 further respondents that were broadly supportive of the application but also asked matters to be taken into account variously expressed concerns about impact on wildlife and/or trees and further recommended provision of water suppression (sprinkler) system in interest of safety.

## 11. Case Officer's Appraisal

- 11.1 Having regard to the information submitted in support of the application, the provisions of the development plan and other material considerations including national planning policy and representations received, the main issues in the determination of the application relate to:
- (i) the acceptability in principle of the proposed development;
  - (ii) whether the proposal would help to eliminate discrimination and/or victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (iii) impact on the safety and efficiency of the highway network and whether adequate provision has been made for sustainable travel;
  - (iv) the economic impact of the proposed development;
  - (v) impact on biodiversity;
  - (vi) impact on amenity;
  - (vii) flood risk, drainage and climate change;
  - (viii) townscape, landscape and visual impacts; and
  - (ix) impact on the setting and significance of heritage assets and whether the public benefits that might accrue from the proposed development clearly and convincingly outweigh any harm to the significance of heritage assets.

### Principle of Development

- 11.2 With the hospital campus:
- (i) located entirely within the development boundary for Dorchester wherein Policy SUS2 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that residential, employment and other development to meet the needs of the local area will normally be permitted; and

- (ii) not being subject to either any site specific development plan policy or land use allocation,

and the application site being located entirely within the existing hospital campus, there is no in-principle land use objection to the application proposal.

11.3 Indeed, with the notable exception of the proposed multi storey car park, it is considered that the changes proposed to the layout, use and management of the hospital campus are largely uncontentious and, subject to the imposition of conditions controlling matters such as detailed design, construction and use management, landscaping etc, to be in general accordance with development plan.

11.4 The proposed multi storey car park is proposed to serve the needs of hospital patients, staff and visitors and would be constructed primarily on land currently used for surface level parking. The application more generally is focussed on enabling staff, patients and visitors to more easily navigate various access roads and pathways within the hospital campus so as to reach their destination with reduced risk of congestion, confusion and delay and in consequence less stress and anxiety, less wasted time and reduced cost.

11.5 Policy COM2 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that:

“Proposals for new, replaced or improved local community buildings or structures will be permitted providing the proposal is within or adjoining an existing settlement ... provided that:

- The proposal would be well-located to be accessible to its main catchment population and would not generate significant additional single purpose trips by private transport; and
- The proposal would not undermine the commercial viability of nearby community facilities which may be better placed to service the needs of the surrounding community.”

11.6 Policy COM2 further indicates that:

“Regard will be had to the desirability of concentrating new community buildings and structures in settlements, especially where new housing development is permitted, and also ensuring that, where practicable, the design allows for a range of current and future uses.”

11.7 The hospital campus is well-located to be accessible to its main catchment population and the development under consideration would not, in and of itself, generate significant additional single purpose trips by private transport. Additional parking spaces would be provided within the hospital campus but, at least in the short-term, it is anticipated that these would be used mainly by staff, patients and/or visitors already travelling to the hospital by car but currently parking in off-site locations or otherwise waiting for a space to become available.

11.8 The Trust’s clearly stated intention is to make more efficient use of the hospital campus and has openly presented the multi storey car park as one of the first steps in the delivery of their wider masterplan vision. However, save for the additional parking spaces and other ancillary facilities, the subject application does not propose any additional or replacement development and, in particular, does not provide any

new healthcare or health service facilities likely to generate additional vehicular trips. The submitted Transport Assessment does address additional traffic demand, but only in respect of anticipated growth in travel demand for existing hospital services, which is forecast to happen irrespective of whether the parking and wayfinding proposals go ahead.

- 11.9 Paragraph 122 of the NPPF indicates that planning decisions should support the efficient use of land and Policy ENV15 of the Adopted Local Plan is that development should optimise the potential of the site and make efficient use of the land subject to the limitations inherent in the site and impact on local character. The implications of the proposed development for the character and appearance of the locality are considered later in this appraisal, but in land use terms, the objective of better meeting existing parking demand whilst simultaneously freeing up parts of the hospital campus that are currently used for vehicular parking for alternative and potentially more efficient healthcare and/or health service related development is in general accordance with the development plan and national planning policy.
- 11.10 Some concern has been expressed in representations about the sustainability of providing new and additional car parking facilities at the hospital, but the applicants have provided justification for the additional spaces and further indicated a willingness to accept a planning condition ensuring that total parking provision across the campus is capped to the final capacity assessed in the submitted Transport Assessment (i.e. 1,064 spaces). Even with the additional 127 spaces total provision will remain substantially lower than the guidelines figure suggested in the currently adopted Non Residential Parking Guidelines referenced in policy COM9 of the Adopted Local Plan, the guideline stated for hospitals being 1 car parking space for per 4 staff plus 1 per 3 visitors calculated to equate to approximately 1,532 spaces.
- 11.11 Although some respondents have suggested that the COVID-19 emergency has demonstrated that there is some surplus parking capacity within the hospital campus, no substantiating evidence has been presented indicating that the proposed provision is likely to significantly exceed demand for hospital parking beyond the emergency period and I am satisfied that the combination of existing and likely future development at the hospital will minimally sustain demand for the capped number of spaces proposed.
- 11.12 Some concern has been expressed by respondents to the application about the loss of open space within the campus and particular comment has been made about the importance of open space to the health and well-being of staff, patients and visitors.
- 11.13 Paragraph 121 of the NPPF is clear that that local planning authorities should support proposals to:

“.... make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space.”
- 11.14 The proposal for additional temporary parking provision in the West Annex would result in the development of an open space, but provision for staff, patient and visitor amenity would be maintained elsewhere within the campus. Moreover, although impacts on health and well-being can be material considerations, there is currently

no registered public right of access to the playing field such that use by staff, patients and visitors appears to be entirely at the Trust's discretion. Moreover, it is not considered that the proposed temporary use of the playing field would unacceptably prejudice the Trust's ability to maintain adequate amenity space within the hospital campus for operational purposes in either the short or longer terms.

- 11.15 Policy COM5 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that development on, or the change of use of open spaces of public value and recreational facilities (including school playing fields) will not normally be permitted, but paragraph 6.3.14 of the plan recognises that there will be circumstances where the retention of such facilities is not the best option. Exceptions to the normal position are identified in Policy COM5 to include circumstances in which alternative and/or suitable replacement outdoor or indoor provision of equal or better recreational quality or value is provided in a location which is suitable to meet any deficiency in provision, and/or better placed and accessible to the surrounding community it serves, and there is a clear community benefit.
- 11.16 In recognition that replacement provision has already been delivered as part of the development of the new Damers First School at Poundbury, Sport England has not objected to the development of the West Annex playing field for car parking, nor sought the reinstatement of the playing field when the temporary parking is no longer required to facilitate construction of the multi storey car park. The replacement provision delivered at Poundbury satisfies the development plan policy requirement and the West Annex playing field was not identified for protection as a local green space under Policy ENV3 of the Adopted Local Plan. On this basis, loss of the playing field is not considered to be unacceptable in principle.
- 11.17 The application site is not subject to any nature conservation designation, nor classified as being at high risk of flooding. Dorset Council's public health records indicate that the development lies on a site with a historical and potentially contaminative land use, but it is considered that contamination risk can be adequately controlled by planning condition.
- 11.18 Overall, with respect to land use, it is considered that the application proposals would improve the current situation around vehicle parking and wayfinding at the hospital, make more efficient use of land within the hospital campus and further enable and support the delivery of wider healthcare and health service developments at the in a manner that is broadly consistent with development plan and national planning policy and without triggering any over-riding in principle objection.

#### Equality and Discrimination

- 11.19 The application proposal has implications for the ease and/or difficulty with which staff, patients and visitors would be able to access and move around the hospital campus to the possible disadvantage of people with restricted mobility such as the elderly, people with a disability or other health issues, pregnant women and people with young children. Matters considered to be of particular relevance such people and indeed others include the size, layout and positioning of parking spaces and the provision and layout of paths, roadways and crossing points.
- 11.20 Paragraph 110 of the NPPF provides that applications for development should:

- (a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
  - (b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
  - (c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
  - (d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
  - (e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.
- 11.21 Provision of additional parking spaces within the campus would be to the general benefit of those travelling to the campus by car and, whilst not all parking spaces have been designed to disability standard, enhanced priority provision of disabled spaces is proposed close to the main hospital entrance (47 additional disabled spaces being shown in the north-eastern corner of the campus hospital campus). Improvements are also shown to the drop-off area and for cyclists.
- 11.22 Away from the main hospital entrance, the topography of the hospital is such that the complete elimination of steps on pedestrian routes would require extensive remodelling of the campus such that the arrangements proposed in the application are considered to be both reasonable and adequate. It is further noted that the design for multi storey car park makes provision for at least one lift in each of the service cores.
- 11.23 If implemented, aspects of the proposed development including construction of the proposed multi storey car park would be subject to control under the Building Regulations 2010. Part M of Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations addresses access to and the use of buildings. Compliance with Part M requirements for reasonable provision would help to limit the potential for disadvantage.
- 11.24 Having due regard to the public sector equalities duty, other than with respect to the creation of attractive places (a matter addressed later in this appraisal), the application proposal is considered to be reasonable and in general accordance with paragraph 110 of the NPPF.

#### Sustainable Transport and Impact on Highway Network

- 11.25 Paragraph 108 of the NPPF provides that in assessing specific applications for development it should be ensured that:
- (a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
  - (b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and
  - (c) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

11.26 Policy COM7 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that:

- (i) Development that generates significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes including public transport, walking and cycling can be maximised.
- (ii) Development should be located where the volume of traffic likely to be generated can be accommodated on the local highway network without exacerbating community severance; and
- (iii) Development will not be permitted where the residual cumulative impacts on the efficiency of the transport network are likely to be severe.
- (iv) Development will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that it would not have a severe detrimental effect on road safety, or measures can be introduced to reasonably mitigate potentially dangerous conditions.
- (v) The delivery of a strategic cycle network and improvements to the public rights of way network will be supported. Development should not result in the severance or degradation of existing or proposed routes. Where development degrades the attractiveness of a route, compensatory enhancements will be sought such that there is a net improvement to the public right of way network. Where development proposals provide the opportunity to significantly improve links within the public rights of way network, an appropriate link through the development will be required.

11.27 A number of respondents to the application have expressed concerns regarding longer-term parking requirements should the development outlined in the Trust's masterplan proceed. Whilst potential parking requirements are clearly a relevant matter for consideration in site master-planning, the adequacy of travel and parking provision to serve potential (but as yet not proposed) future developments is of only limited relevance in the determination of the current application which should be considered on its own merits. Construction of the proposed multi storey park would not prevent either the maintenance or further provision for vehicular parking elsewhere in the hospital campus and the acceptability or otherwise of such future provision would be a matter for consideration should further applications for planning permission be submitted.

11.28 Dorchester in general and the hospital campus more particularly are both well located to minimise the need to travel and, by Dorset standards, both are very well served by public transport. Dorset Council's Highway Liaison Engineer has not raised any concerns regarding the ability of the local highway network to accommodate hospital related traffic, nor indicated that residential cumulative impact on either road safety or network efficiency should be regarded as severe.

11.29 In response to the comments made by Dorset Council's Sustainable Travel Team, an updated Travel Plan has been presented and the Trust's commitment to the aims of addressing the hospital's transport impacts has been emphasised. It has further been noted that the Travel Plan has been prepared in the content of

“... chronic under-provision of of-site car parking and the need to free up space at the DCH campus for vital refurbishment and development plans to ensure the Trust's vision of a fit for purpose hospital Estate in the future.”

11.30 The Trust's Travel Plan aims to to improve access to the hospital for staff, patients and visitors through the application of suitable sustainable transport initiatives

focussed on increasing the uptake of sustainable modes of travel (particularly public transport, car sharing, walking and cycling) and by encouraging and enabling staff and visitors to use modes other than single occupancy vehicles to access the Hospital, which in turn will help to relieve parking pressure on site, and overspill parking on the surrounding roads. It is recognised that the Plan seeks to achieve a balance between improved on-site parking provision on the one hand and delivering travel behavioural change and increased sustainable travel on the other.

- 11.31 A limit on the total number of parking spaces available for use at any one time in the hospital campus and the implementation and the further review of the proposed Travel Plan could be secured by means of planning condition. Subject to such conditions, the provision made for sustainable travel and likely impact on the safety and operation of the highway network are considered to be acceptable.

#### Economic Impact

- 11.32 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF notes that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It is further noted that the approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
- 11.33 Information submitted in support of the application identifies a range of economic benefits associated with the proposed development. Foremost amongst these is the stated importance of the proposed multi storey car park to the delivery of expansion plans contemplated within the Trust's masterplan and for which £62,500,000 of government funding is understood to have been allocated as part of the Government's National Health Infrastructure Plan.
- 11.34 The applicant's Planning Statement further notes that an Economic Value Assessment report about Dorset County Hospital prepared by the Policy and Research Team at Dorset County Council in February 2018 highlighted a number of key Gross Value Added (GVA) benefits of the Trust on Dorchester, West Dorset and Dorset as a whole, referring in particular to findings that:
- (i) the Trust created employment for 3,493 people in total, equivalent to 2,350.6 full time equivalent (FTE) posts, with over 90% of the workforce living within the Dorset area; and
  - (ii) the hospital contributes a total of £169 million in GVA to the economy and whilst there are about 2,350 FTE posts directly within the hospital, a further 1,250 are supported in the economy through supply chain and household spending.
- 11.35 As both a substantial investment and construction project in its own right and also a potential precursor to further healthcare and health service development at the hospital campus, it is my opinion that considerable weight and importance may be accorded to the potential economic benefits of the proposed development.

## Biodiversity

- 11.36 Some concern has been expressed in representations regarding the implications of the proposed development for nature conservation and biodiversity.
- 11.37 Paragraph 170 of the NNPF provides that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the local environment by, amongst other matters, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. Amongst other matters, policy ENV2 of the Adopted Local Plan provides:
- (i) that proposals that conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported;
  - (ii) that opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity in and around developments will be encouraged; and
  - (iii) that development of major sites should take opportunities to help connect and improve the wider ecological networks.
- 11.38 The approved Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (BMEP) submitted in support of the application is considered to provide reasonable ecological mitigation and enhancement measures to meet the duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Certification of the BEMP further indicates that its implementation would avoid the likelihood of deliberate disturbance and/or provide sufficient measures likely to remedy any disturbance such that in considering an application for a disturbance licence, Natural England would likely be satisfied that the test in regulation 55(9)(b) in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 is capable of being met. Implementation of the approved BEMP may be secured by planning condition and would further secure policy compliance.

## Impact on Amenity

- 11.39 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF provides that planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.
- 11.40 Policy ENV16 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that proposals for development should be designed to minimize their impact on the amenity and quiet enjoyment of residents close to it. As such, amongst other matters, the policy further states that development proposals will only be permitted provided they do not have a significant adverse effect on the living conditions of occupiers of residential properties through loss of privacy or on the amenity of the occupiers of properties through inadequate daylight or excessive overshadowing, overbearing impact or flicker; they do not generate a level of activity or noise that will detract significantly from the character and amenity of the area or the quiet enjoyment of residential properties; and they do not generate unacceptable pollution, vibration or detrimental emissions unless it can be demonstrated that the effects on amenity and living conditions, health and the natural environment can be mitigated to the appropriate standard.
- 11.41 Policy ENV16 additionally provides that proposals for external lighting schemes (including illuminated advertisement schemes) should be clearly justified and

designed to minimize potential pollution from glare or spillage of light and that the intensity of lighting should be the minimum necessary to achieve its purpose, and the benefits of the lighting scheme must be shown to outweigh any adverse effects.

- 11.42 The impact that the proposed development would have on the character and appearance of the locality is considered later in this appraisal, but it is not considered that the proposed development would have any unacceptable impact on residential amenity.
- 11.43 The Air Quality Assessment submitted in support of the application considers the potential for fugitive dust emissions as a result of earthworks, construction and track-out activities during the construction phase and considers that the use of good practice control measures would provide suitable mitigation for a development of this size and nature and reduce potential impacts to an acceptable level. The assessment further considers impact on air pollutant levels during the operational phase. Emissions predicted are assessed to be not significant and air quality not considered a constraint to development.
- 11.44 Some concern has been expressed in representations made about the application regarding the potential for vibration impact during the construction of the proposed development. It is considered that this and other potential construction impacts including noise, dust and other emissions could be adequately controlled and/or mitigated through the submission, approval and implementation of a Construction Environment Management Plan as might be secured by planning condition.
- 11.45 The submitted lighting proposals respond to representations received from the AONB Partnership's Landscape Planning Officer and are considered to be broadly satisfactory. Further details of the design, installation and management of the proposed lighting could be secured by planning condition. Other potential impacts including signal interference could also be addressed by planning condition.

#### Flood Risk, Drainage and Climate Change

- 11.46 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF makes clear that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and helping to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 11.47 Specifically in relation to flood risk, paragraph 155 of the NPPF provides that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future) and that where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 11.48 Paragraph 165 of the NPPF states that major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate and that the systems used should:
  - (a) take account of advice from the lead local flood authority;
  - (b) have appropriate proposed minimum operational standards;

- (c) have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development; and
  - (d) where possible, provide multifunctional benefits.
- 11.49 Policy ENV5 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that new development or the intensification of existing uses should be planned to avoid risk of flooding (from surface water run-off, groundwater, fluvial and coastal sources) where possible. and that the risk of flooding will be minimised by:
- steering development towards the areas of lowest risk and avoiding inappropriate development in the higher flood risk zones;
  - ensuring development will not generate flooding through surface water runoff and/or exacerbate flooding elsewhere.
- 11.50 The application site is regarded as being at low risk of fluvial flooding (Flood Zone 1), but at some theoretical risk of surface water flooding during severe (1:100/1000 years) rainfall events. The areas surrounding the hospital campus are also within Flood Zone 1, but land under the Damers Road railway bridge is known to be affected by actual surface water flooding and there is some theoretical pluvial flood risk along Dagmar Road.
- 11.51 The proposed development has implications for surface water management within and beyond the hospital campus. Following objection to the Surface Water Drainage Strategy submitted with the application, a revised Drainage Strategy was submitted for consideration.
- 11.52 At the time of writing, Dorset Council's Flood Risk Management Team are maintaining an objection on the basis that insufficient information has been provided regarding surface water management from the development. However, it is understood that the issue of concern may be progressed in advance of the Committee, potentially enabling the objection to be removed. Accordingly, an update on this matter will be reported at Committee.
- 11.53 Paragraph 11.7.2 of the Adopted Local Plan notes that objectives of the Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan (DTEP) include supporting the economic prosperity of the town, reducing through traffic, and providing a higher quality environment (both in terms of the historic fabric of the town and for pedestrians, cyclists, the elderly and disabled).
- 11.54 Construction of both the proposed multi storey and temporary car parks would inevitably involve emissions associated with the production and delivery of materials as well as the conduct of on-site engineering and building operations. Once operational, the principle source of emissions would be hospital related traffic. Onsite electricity use would include internal and external lighting, lift operation and EV charging.
- 11.55 No calculation has been provided as to the likely carbon footprint of either the construction, use or subsequent decommissioning of the proposed development, but comment has been made that:
- (i) as the new drainage system has been designed to incorporate current standards including the effect of climate change, the proposed development

would lead to an increase in the capacity of surface water storage at the hospital:

- (ii) the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance indicates that Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are important because, amongst other matters, they can positively contribute to reducing carbon emissions and climate impacts (PPG ID Ref: 42-006-20140306);
- (iii) the proposed development would deliver a significant increase in the number of electric vehicle charge points within Dorchester, supporting the transition away from combustion engine vehicles and moving towards a low carbon economy;
- (iv) the Trust operates a Sustainability Intranet Site which provides resources for staff including information on sustainable travel;
- (v) there are a range of travel measures that are currently in operation at the hospital;
- (vi) the headline target of the submitted Travel Plan is to achieve a 10% reduction in Single Occupancy Vehicle journeys over a period of 5 years;
- (vii) a Sustainability Officer works with the Trust's Estates Team to drive through sustainability improvements;
- (viii) the Trust's Sustainability Development Management Plan (SDMP) is updated annually by the Trust's Sustainability Officer and that part of the annual report for the SDMP assesses aspects of transport at the hospital which includes monitoring carbon emissions, mileage and transport needs and assessment;
- (ix) the hospital's Sustainability and Travel Working Group (SATWG) currently meet monthly to discuss items including utility usage, waste, carbon savings, green travel and parking and that the SATWG reviews the performance of the Trust's Sustainable Development Management Plan, which includes a review of progress against travel measures currently active at the DCH site; and
- (x) that it is proposed that the Travel Plan Steering Group forms part of the SATWG.

11.56 In addition to tree and shrub planting detailed within the proposed landscaping schemes, the applicants have further indicated a willingness to plant 170 new trees off-site on land owned by Dorchester Town Council, with species and location to be determined by Dorchester Town Council. The application indicates that this would result in an overall increase in tree cover within the town and constitutes an overall ratio of 2:1 in terms of replacement tree planting to those removed. The Parish Council is understood to be supportive of the proposed arrangement such that it is considered that provision for the submission, approval and implementation of such planting could be secured planning condition.

11.57 As noted earlier in this appraisal, the currently proposed development will not, generate significant additional single purpose trips by private transport. The total impact of the proposed development on climate change is likely to be fairly typical for development of its type but would be partially mitigated by the proposed and suggested tree planting and by the implementation of the proposed Travel Plan. The impact on climate change must also be balanced against the social and economic benefits of the proposed development, which are considerable.

## Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impacts

- 11.58 The proposed multi storey car park has implications for the character and appearance of both the locality (near vicinity) of the application site and more distant locations within and beyond Dorchester.
- 11.59 The seven storey building would be constructed adjacent to the Children's Centre in the south-eastern corner of the hospital campus behind existing trees that are proposed to be retained along Williams Avenue and at the junction between Williams Avenue and Damers Road.
- 11.60 The car park would be a substantial structure measuring approximately 78 metres in length and approximately 32.5 metres in width. External wall heights would vary but are shown to range from approximately 18.5 to approximately 22 metres above local ground levels.
- 11.61 Being seven storeys tall, the building would be substantially taller than the vast majority of development in Dorchester and considerably higher than much of the development in the near vicinity of the hospital campus. However with an indicated parapet height of 96.52 metres AD, the parapet would be approximately 2.2 metres lower than the ridge line of the East Wing of the main hospital building and approximately 5.8 metres lower than that of the South Wing. Nevertheless, the parapet would be approximately 25 metres above pavement level at the junction between Williams Avenue and Damers Road and approximately 8 metres higher than the ridge of the Children's Centre roof. The proposed service cores would also project above the parapet and be only slightly lower than the the ridge of the East Wing. The car park would also be positioned much closer to the campus boundary with both Damers Road and Williams Avenue than any part of the main hospital building and would be by far the tallest building occupying a location adjacent to any boundary of the hospital campus.
- 11.62 Occupying a relatively elevated position adjacent to the Dorchester Conservation Area and within the setting of a number of listed buildings and other heritage assets, the hospital campus in general and the site of the proposed multi storey car park more particularly constitutes a location of some landscape, townscape, visual and heritage sensitivity.
- 11.63 Representations received from Historic England, Dorset Council's Senior Landscape Architect, Dorset Council's Senior Conservation and Design Officer, the Dorset AONB Partnership's Landscape Planning Officer and others indicate concern over the landscape/townscape and visual impact of the proposed building and in particular indicate concern over its size, positioning and massing.
- 11.64 Dorset Council's Senior Conservation and Design Officer has noted that in pre-application discussions, the proposed multi storey car park was of major concern regarding scale, massing and visual impact on heritage assets.
- 11.65 Paragraph 124 of the NPPF is clear that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It is further stated that being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential

for achieving this, as is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

11.66 Amongst other matters, paragraph 127 of the NPPF provides that planning decisions should ensure that developments:

- “a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, ...
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) ...”

11.67 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF makes clear that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

11.68 Paragraph 184 for the NPPF notes that heritage assets range from sites and building of local historic value to those of the highest significance and that these assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

11.69 In relation to conserving and enhancing the natural environment paragraph 172 of the NPPF provides that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

11.70 In accordance with the NPPF, Policy ENV1 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that the plan area's exceptional landscapes will be protected, taking into account the objectives of the Dorset AONB Management Plan and that development which would harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the Dorset AONB will not be permitted.

11.71 Policy ENV1 of the Adopted Local Plan further provides that development should be located and designed so that it does not detract from and, where reasonable, enhances the local landscape character and that where proposals relate to sites where existing development is of visually poor quality, opportunities should be taken to secure visual enhancements. It is further stated that development that significantly adversely affects the character or visual quality of the local landscape will not be permitted and that appropriate measures will be required to moderate the adverse effects of development on the landscape.

11.72 Policy ENV4 of the Adopted Local Plan addresses heritage assets noting that:

- (i) the impact of development on a designated or non-designated heritage asset and its setting must be thoroughly assessed against the significance of the

- asset and that development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance (criterion i);
- (ii) applications affecting the significance of a heritage asset or its setting will be required to provide sufficient information to demonstrate how the proposals would positively contribute to the asset's conservation;
  - (iii) a thorough understanding of the significance of the asset and other appropriate evidence including conservation area character appraisals and management plans should be used to inform development proposals including potential conservation and enhancement measures;
  - (iv) any harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset must be justified and that applications will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal; if it has been demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset, and; if the works proposed are the optimum required to secure the sustainable use of the asset.

11.73 Amongst other matters, Policy ENV10 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that:

- (i) all development proposals should contribute positively to the maintenance and enhancement of local identity and distinctiveness. Development should be informed by the character of the site and its surroundings; and
- (ii) development will provide for the future retention and protection of trees and other features that contribute to an area's distinctive character. Such features may not always be designated or otherwise formally recognised.
- (iii) development should only be permitted where it provides sufficient hard and soft landscaping to successfully integrate with the character of the site and its surrounding area; and
- (iv) opportunities to incorporate features that would enhance local character, including public art, or that relate to the historical, ecological or geological interest of a site, should be taken where appropriate.

11.74 Policy ENV12 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that development will only be permitted where the siting, alignment, design, scale, mass, and materials used complements and respects the character of the surrounding area or would actively improve legibility or reinforce the sense of place. Amongst other matters, this means that the general design should be in harmony with the adjoining buildings and the area as a whole and that the position of the building on its site should relate positively to adjoining buildings, routes, open areas, rivers, streams and other features that contribute to the character of the area.

11.75 The Planning Statement submitted in support of the application indicates that:

"The design of the car park has considered the size of the building, including its height and visual appearance. The concept has always acknowledged that it will change the amount of built form within the hospital, however, such change should be considered in light of the current character and setting of the hospital and immediate surroundings.

The design approach has looked at what can be done to incorporate elements to break up the building mass, including green walling and the use of artwork to make a feature of the elevations. The height of the car park has always been designed to be lower than the main hospital buildings, so that when it is

viewed from near and far it is seen within this context. To further assist, the roofline of the building will be staggered to break it up.”

(Planning Statement, page 11)

- 11.76 The application is further supported by a *Design and Access Statement*, a *Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal*, and *Heritage Assessment* and a number of visual representations and other material illustrating whether and how the proposed car park might be viewed from a number of representative viewpoints. The presented illustrative material has attracted some criticism particularly on account of illustrating the summer context only, with little or no comparable indicators of the change in visibility under winter foliage conditions.
- 11.77 Nevertheless, it is clear from the presented plans, drawings and other visual information submitted in support of the application that parts of the proposed building would be apparent in views from a wide range of locations within and beyond Dorchester, though there is notable disagreement over the assessed implications of that visibility.
- 11.78 Both townscape and visual impacts would be greatest at close proximity to the proposed car park, particularly:
- (i) along the lower sections of Damers Road, from Alexandra Road, from Dorchester West Railway Station, from Williams Avenue and from the junction Bridport Road at and near its junction with Williams Avenue; and
  - (ii) from within the hospital campus itself most notably from Damers Hospital and from within and around the Children’s Centre car park.
- 11.79 The retained and proposed trees and landscaping to the south and east of the car park would help to screen and/or filter views of the building from some locations and also assist in breaking up the appearance of the car park from the east and south. Nevertheless, there would be relatively open views of the building from the station platforms, the junction between Williams Avenue and Damers Road, the lower section of Alexandra Road and from Damers Hospital.
- 11.80 Magnitude of impact on both landscape/townscape character and visual amenity would tend to decrease with distance, but the car park would be apparent in a range of views from:
- (i) within and the Conservation Area (including locations within the residential streets to the east of the railway, Borough Gardens, the Grade II listed Dorchester Military Museum and the scheduled monument comprising the henge, Romano-British amphitheatre and civil known collectively as Maumbury Rings which is located approximately 370 metres from the application site and which is also an important public open space);
  - (ii) from more distant designated heritage assets within and beyond Dorchester including Poundbury Camp and Maiden Castle;
  - (iii) various locations within the Dorset AONB including Maiden Castle, Bincombe Down and Came Down; and
  - (iv) other publicly accessible locations around the town including Came Down and bridleways and footpaths to the west of the B3143 Slyer’s Lane between Cokers Frome and Waterston.

- 11.81 In various views, the car would be apparent on the skyline along with historic landmark buildings.
- 11.82 The Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal submitted in support of the application concludes that:
- “... the Proposed Development would reflect the character of the existing Dorset County Hospital campus and would incorporate some positive design principles to reduce the prominence of the built form when perceived from the surrounding area. The new built form would contrast with the character of the surrounding townscape and would be a noticeable element in some short range views. This would have a similar effect as the existing county hospital buildings which are often prominent utilitarian features. The elevational treatment of the MSCP would incorporate greater visual interest than these structures and would be designed in collaboration with the Trust and the local community to select artwork with local relevance and interest. It is not considered that the new building would detract from the experience of the landscape setting that surrounds Dorchester, nor would it appear dominant when experienced from surrounding residential areas and central areas of the Dorchester Conservation Area.”
- 11.83 However, Dorset Council’s Senior Landscape Architect considers that the proposed development will have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Dorchester Conservation Area and on important views from within the town and further considers that the cumulative impact of the proposals in combination with the existing hospital buildings increases the significance of the adverse effects.
- 11.84 Whilst the Dorset AONB’s Partnership Landscape Planning Officer concurs with the presented appraisal’s findings in relation to the magnitude of change and type of effect to the character and type of the Dorchester Downs area of AONB as a result of the proposed development (Very Low Adverse), visual impact from Maiden Castle are considered to be Low Adverse rather than Very Low Adverse, but in ether assessment still adverse (albeit these impacts being material rather than significant).
- 11.85 Whilst not disagreeing with conclusions regarding the likely visibility of the proposed development presented in the *Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal*, Historic England’s Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas has similarly diverged in her assessment of impact and effect commenting that:
- “... in relation to assets such as Maiden Castle and the conservation area, whilst not disputing the car park’s visibility will be restricted to a limited element of the view or a localised part of the conservation area, we would consider the degree of change to be somewhat higher than the report. The height, bulk and unrelieved massing of the car park are of a noticeably different form to other large buildings in the hospital site, and this is what could cause some harm to the setting of the conservation area and Maiden Castle, judging by the views that have been presented.”
- 11.86 Having considered the various assessments and opinions expressed, I am inclined to concur with the findings and conclusions of the consultees more so than those of

the applicant's consultants. I further concur with the Council's Senior Landscape Architect that the proposed multi storey car park would not:

- (i) add to the overall quality of the area;
- (ii) be visually attractive or sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- (iii) take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area;
- (iv) sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets;
- (v) make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; or
- (vi) relate positively to adjoining buildings and other features that contribute to the character of the area,

and that the application proposal therefore does not comply with the requirements of paragraphs 127, 130 and 192 of the NPPF or policies ENV10 and ENV12 of the Adopted Local Plan. The application is also contrary to policy ENV1 and ENV4 of the Adopted Local Plan.

#### Heritage Assets, Significance and Alternatives

11.87 Whilst the proposed development would not directly (i.e. physically) impact any designated heritage asset, Historic England, Dorset Council's Senior Conservation and Design Officer and Dorset Council's Senior Landscape Architect have each indicated concern regarding the potential of the proposed multi storey car park to adversely impact on the setting of designated heritage assets. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, national planning policy distinguishes between 'substantial' and 'less than substantial harm' with consequent policy implications depending on the judgement made. Development may also preserve (i.e. maintain) or enhance and/or better reveal heritage significance.

11.88 The Heritage Assessment submitted in support of the application comments that:

"... the development would introduce a new built element of increased scale and mass into the surroundings of Grade II Listed Damers Hospital and Dorchester Conservation Area, which would change the setting of these assets to some degree. However, the key contributors to the significance and character and appearance of these assets would be preserved, and this change, seen in the context of existing use of the Site and its surrounds, would be very limited."

11.89 The assessment further concludes that the proposed development would result in no harm to the significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets.

11.90 Consultation responses from both Historic England and Dorset Council's Senior Conservation and Design Officer highlight the likelihood of harm to the significance of designated heritage assets and neither therefore endorse the overall conclusion of the submitted heritage assessment.

11.91 By definition harm to the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced (i.e. its setting) will detract from the heritage significance of the asset.

- 11.92 The glossary of the NPPF provides that significance for heritage policy is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest; that such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic; and that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 11.93 Setting involves more than purely visual considerations, but views from and towards a heritage asset are relevant factors in how an asset is experienced. Historic relationships between places and cultural heritage associations can be important non-visual attributes of setting. Not all change in the setting of a heritage asset will be harmful (detrimental) to heritage significance, some change may be neutral in effect, thereby preserving heritage significance, and some change beneficial, in consequence enhancing heritage significance.
- 11.94 As set out above, the multi storey car park would be a substantial building that would have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the locality and also impact on the character and appearance of more distant locations. The landscape, townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development also have the potential to effect the significance of a range of heritage assets.
- 11.95 In this instance, the landscape, townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development would generally become less pronounced with distance and as views of the proposed multi storey car park become more restricted by intervening development and/or vegetation. However, on account of its size, positioning and massing, even when viewed from distance, it is considered that the visibility of proposed multi storey car park would materially detract from the setting of a number of Dorchester's heritage assets with consequent harm to their heritage significance.
- 11.96 The multi storey car park would be located just outside of the Dorchester Conservation Area and in close proximity to a number of other designated heritage assets including the Grade II listed Damer's Hospital, Dorchester West Railway Station and the Dorchester Military Museum. The significance of these assets lies primarily in their architectural and historic interest. In my opinion, introduction of the multi storey car park would result in obvious and marked change in the setting of these assets, leading to less than substantial harm to their heritage significance. Through similarly pronounced detrimental change in the setting of the former Cornwall Hotel (now known as the Georgie Porgie) the proposed development would also cause less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of this undesignated key building in the Dorchester Conservation Area.
- 11.97 Less pronounced but material detriment to the setting of more distant designated heritage assets including the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Borough Garden and scheduled monuments at Maumbury Rings, Poundbury Camp and Maiden Castle would also cause less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of these assets.
- 11.98 In my opinion, all resulting harm, both individually and cumulatively, would be less than substantial and generally reside towards the lower end of the very wide spectrum of harm that constitutes less than substantial harm. However, paragraph 193 of the NPPF is clear that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to

the asset's conservation and that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be. In this instance, undesignated assets are of local importance, whilst the designated assets range from county to at least national importance.

11.99 Paragraph 194 of the NPPF is similarly clear that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. By implication, reasonable efforts should be made to avoid unnecessary harm through, for example, the consideration of potential alternative means of addressing the development requirement. The subject application does outline some alternatives considered in the design development process and provides some explanation of the design considerations underpinning the Trust's masterplan vision. However, a range of respondents have criticised the level of detail presented in the application with regards alternatives and very little further detail has been provided to address these criticisms.

11.100 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF makes clear that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal and paragraph 197 of the NPPF is equally clear that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application and that in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

11.101 Public benefit would accrue from the proposed development in that:

- (i) use of the proposed development would directly benefit hospital staff, patients and visitors;
- (ii) the direct economic impact of what would be a substantial building and engineering project would be to the benefit of the local economy;
- (iii) provision of the multi storey car park would make more efficient use of previously developed land and thereby help to reduce development pressure elsewhere;
- (iv) provision of the proposed multi storey car park would help to free up space elsewhere in the hospital campus that is currently given over to surface level parking for other potential healthcare and/or health service related development; and
- (v) there would be net gains for biodiversity.

11.102 However, in this instance, the subject application has been criticised for the omission of a detailed options appraisal that clearly demonstrates that the proposed scheme is either the one of least overall environmental impact or the one of least impact on the setting of heritage assets. Although presented in the context of the Trust's masterplan, little by way of options analysis has been submitted, with alternatives considered rejected or disregarded seemingly without detailed testing or analysis.

11.103 Having regard to the size of the hospital campus and the positioning, nature and extent of the existing development both within and beyond the campus, such omission is a significant failing in that it has not been clearly and convincingly established that:

- (i) the harm to heritage significance has been justified;
- (ii) that the public benefits associated with the proposed development could not be realised in some other less harmful way; nor
- (iii) that the potential benefits of the proposed development would clearly and convincingly outweigh the overall harm to heritage significance.

11.104 Both the development plan and the NPPF indicate that development should reinforce the distinctiveness of heritage assets and take opportunity for improvement rather than contribute further incremental cumulative erosion of the designated assets and their setting.

11.105 It is acknowledged that the hospital buildings are a greater scale than those of the Victorian and Edwardian suburbs within the Conservation Area and of a design that does not contribute positively to the neighbouring heritage asset's character. However, the main buildings are set further back within the site, in part isolated physically from the Conservation Area, and not prominently located at a gateway to the Conservation Area. The proposed building form and the proposed material palette take no reference from the immediate heritage environs and the harm to heritage assets arising from the introduction of the building would be appreciable.

11.106 The proposed development is therefore contrary to policy ENV4 of the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 and paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### Summary and Conclusion

11.107 Consideration has been given to the most relevant provisions of the development plan and account taken of other material considerations including national planning policy, representations made about the application and potential public benefits associated with the proposed development.

11.108 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

11.109 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. National planning policy is clear that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development (NPPF, paragraph 124). Paragraph 130 of the NPPF makes clear that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

11.110 Paragraph 184 for the NPPF notes that heritage assets range from sites and building of local historic value to those of the highest significance and that these assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

11.111 Whilst there is no in principle land use objection to the proposed development and its delivery would:

- (i) be of direct benefit to hospital staff, patients and visitors;
- (ii) be to the benefit of the local economy;
- (iii) make more efficient use of previously developed land and thereby help to reduce pressure for development elsewhere;
- (iv) free up space elsewhere in the hospital campus that is currently given over to surface level parking for other potential healthcare and/or health service related development; and
- (v) result in net gains for biodiversity,

on account of its size, positioning and massing the proposed multi storey car park would appear as an incongruous addition to the hospital campus out of character with neighbouring and surrounding development, detracting from the character and appearance of both the locality and Dorchester's wider landscape setting.

11.112 It is further considered that the proposed development would not:

- (i) add to the overall quality of the area;
- (ii) be visually attractive or sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- (iii) take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area;
- (iv) sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets;
- (v) make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; or
- (vi) relate positively to adjoining buildings and other features that contribute to the character of the area.

11.113 In consequence, the application proposal is contrary to policies ENV1, ENV4, ENV10 and ENV12 of the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 and further contrary to paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

11.114 Through detrimental change in their setting, the proposed development would also cause less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of designated heritage assets in the near vicinity of the application site including the Dorchester Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Damer's Hospital, Dorchester West Railway Station and the Dorchester Military Museum.

11.115 Through similarly obvious and marked detrimental change in the setting of the former Cornwall Hotel (now known as the Georgie Porgie) the proposed development would also cause less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of this undesignated key building in the Dorchester Conservation Area.

11.116 Less pronounced but material detriment to the setting of more distant designated heritage assets including the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Borough Garden and scheduled monuments at Maumbury Rings, Poundbury Camp and Maiden Castle would also cause further less than substantial harm to their heritage significance.

11.117 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF is clear that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should

be given to the asset's conservation and that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF is similarly clear that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

11.118 In the absence of a detailed options appraisal and having regard to the size of the hospital campus and the positioning, nature and extent of the existing development both within and beyond the campus, it is considered that it has not been clearly and convincingly established that the consequent harm to heritage significance has been justified, that the public benefits associated with the proposed development could not be realised in some other less harmful way or that the potential benefits of the proposed development would clearly and convincingly outweigh the overall harm to heritage significance.

11.119 The proposed development is therefore contrary to policy ENV4 of the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 and paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

11.120 Planning permission should therefore be refused for the reasons set out in section 3 of the report. This conclusion is reached having due regard to the statutory duties outlined in section 6 of this report.

Huw Williams MRTPI  
Lead Project Officer (Corporate Projects)  
Economic Growth and Infrastructure  
Dorset Council  
04 September 2020