

Pre-application Officer Report

Date Received: 17 February 2014
Proposal: Windsor Link Railway - creation of a link between two existing rail lines into Windsor
Location: Land From Barry Avenue Arches To Romney Lock Road Including Windsor Train Stations Thames Street Windsor
Planning Officer: Claire Pugh

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The concept of the scheme is to improve connectivity through Windsor, but also to improve connectivity regionally. It is proposed that one new station would be created, and that the existing stations in time would cease to operate as stations but would be retained and put to another use. The new station would be connected by a railway (some of it would be new railway track) and tunnel; an indicative route has been provided, and the various methods for constructing the tunnels have been identified. In addition to the proposed railway, it is also proposed to redevelop sites in Windsor which would help facilitate the development of the railway. The main focus of this pre-application advice is on the proposed railway, however a brief overview of the planning constraints and considerations of the potential development sites is included within this report.

2. EXPLANATION

2.1 The key issues for consideration are:

- i Impact on Listed Buildings and Conservation Area;
- ii Archaeology
- iii Highways
- iv Flooding
- iv Linking the project to the Borough Local Plan
- v Environmental Impact Assessment

Also in considering a planning application, the economic and social benefits of the scheme will need to be considered, and as part of any planning application, the applicant would be expected to set out what these benefits would be.

Impact on Listed Buildings and Conservation Area

2.2 The proposed route of the railway would run above ground and underground. In terms of the impact on the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings, the new route out from the centre of Windsor towards the north east of the town (which would involve the creation of an underground tunnel) would run through the Windsor Town Centre Conservation Area, and would have impacts on a number of Listed Buildings.

2.3 At this stage, it has not been identified which Listed Buildings would be impacted by the scheme. A detailed assessment of the impact on the Listed Buildings (both the physical impact, and their setting) would be required. The scheme would involve significant engineering works to create the tunnel, and so the physical impact on Listed Buildings would be particularly important as the foundations of Listed buildings will be weaker than more modern buildings.

2.4 The Conservation Officer advises that without the baseline information of all the Listed Buildings that which would be impacted by the scheme, it is not possible to consider the level of impact of this proposal. They advise that a full assessment of the significance of all heritage assets that would be affected by the proposed development including the settings of those assets would need to be undertaken, as would the impact on the character of the Conservation Area. The assessment would need to set out clearly the impact of the proposed development on those assets and their settings. Ultimately, there would need to be a compelling case put forward in respect of the level of

public benefit that would arise from this scheme (these would include social, economic and environmental benefits), which would need to outweigh the level of any harm caused.

- 2.5** The onus is on the applicant to undertake this assessment, and to demonstrate that the benefits associated with the scheme clearly outweigh any harm caused to the significance of heritage assets within Windsor, and to their contribution to the tourism appeal and historic character of the town and also to Eton.

Archaeology

- 2.6** The potential archaeological implications of this scheme (excluding any potential linked development proposals) are twofold:

- the historic medieval and post-medieval settlement of New Windsor
- the archaeologically rich Middle Thames Valley.

- 2.7** The medieval town of New Windsor is a highly significant heritage asset, having developed and grown as a result of the royal founding of the Castle in the 11th century. The framework of the medieval settlement is well-preserved in its street pattern. However, much of the buried archaeological heritage relating to the medieval town has been lost through development, cellaring and other impacts. The surviving buried archaeological remains are therefore a significant, precious and finite resource.

- 2.8** The buried archaeological heritage of the town has been little explored to date but recent excavations, especially those close to the River Thames, demonstrate the survival of deep stratified medieval and post-medieval deposits, containing rare waterlogged material such as leather, wood and plant remains. Within the area of the medieval town, a cut-and-cover or bored tunnel are possible options for the proposed rail link. The depth of stratified deposits and the impact on sensitive, waterlogged deposits would therefore need to be considered in the case of the latter option.

- 2.9** The Middle Thames Valley is rich in buried archaeological remains and some of the regions most significant and nationally important prehistoric monuments, such as the Eton Wick Neolithic causewayed enclosure, occur within the valley.

- 2.10** In view of the archaeological potential of the proposed scheme, further information will need to be provided in advance of any planning application describing the likely buried archaeological remains along the route, their significance, and the impacts of the scheme upon them and how these impacts might be mitigated. A balanced view will then be able to be made on the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the archaeological resource that will be impacted by the proposed scheme.

- 2.11** An iterative programme of desk-based assessment and exploratory trial excavation, aided by information from geotechnical information and other sources, will therefore be required to inform any planning application. The duration, logistical challenges and cost of this work (and of any potential mitigation works should the scheme proceed) should not be underestimated and must be at the applicants expense.

Highways

- 2.12** The Highway Authority advises that they cannot make an assessment on this proposal until the full details of the scheme are known. The proposal will have an impact on highways both during the construction and operational phases. When details of the scheme are known, a full scoping report should be produced and accord with the Guidance on Transport Assessment as recommend by Department of Transport (March 2007). The scoping report should also refer to the Highway Authority's Design Standard and Parking Strategy [2004] or as amended.

- 2.13** The scoping report should pick out the issues that will be covered in the transport assessment, but as a minimum the transport assessment should cover the following matters:

Existing Condition	Site	<p>This element of the report should describe the proposed development in relation to the existing highway network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site location and the surrounding area • Permitted and existing uses in the surrounding area • Existing site access
Baseline Data	Transport	<p>Description of the travel characteristics of the existing sites within the development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing trips and distribution • Existing public transport • Pedestrian and cycle movement • Car parking provision - car parking beat survey to determine what proportion of the use is short, medium and long stay. This is one of many tools in determining whether additional car parking spaces are required • Current traffic flows at junctions and links, including critical links • Accidents records • Planned transport improvements • List of consented schemes or planned schemes in the local plan within 3km of the site.
Proposed development		<p>Description of the proposed development including the quantum of development, access, parking and servicing information (including numbers of staff for the development)</p>
Public transport assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current capacity (buses and trains) • Public transport relevant to the site • Measures to address any shortfall in capacity
Accessibility by non- car modes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of the site by sustainable modes of transport • Measures to improve accessibility
Road network assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment of the available capacity on the road network • Development proposal, its impact and any mitigation measures
Trip generation and Transport Modelling		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic data and traffic forecast • Current traffic counts • Queue lengths • Journey times etc. • Turning counts • Forecast of the traffic generation • A 10 year assessment/ appraisal of the scheme • Conclusion and mitigation measures
Construction Management Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the servicing arrangement during the construction and demolition phases without the development impacting on the surrounding highway network. • Construction routes • Construction Travel Plan
Traffic Management Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolition and Traffic Management Plan including appropriate access to the site for

	<p>demolition, excavation and construction traffic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Construction Program ▪ Designated temporary routes for pedestrian, cycle and vehicular routes through the town centre during the construction phase ▪ New pedestrian and vehicular routes following completion of the development ▪ Assessment of the potential congestion, delays, disruptions or extended journey times due to the works and proposed mitigation measures ▪ Equally, the submission would need to demonstrate whether the development would lead to reduced or increased journey times and delays ▪ Temporary traffic signals if required ▪ Temporary parking arrangements
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2.14 In addition to the above, it will be important to set out the wider understanding of the scheme's overall impact on 'movement' and what it means for the town. You would need to explain:

- what it would deliver in terms of public transport benefits
- Any implications for bus movements as a result of moving the location of station.
- Are there any significant implications for the town arising from shifts in pedestrian movements as a result of shifting the station (i.e. public realm, retail footfall, road crossings)

Flooding

2.15 Parts of the route would run through areas at risk of flooding. You are aware that the Environment Agency charge for their pre-application advice, but it would be essential that you engage with them on this scheme before developing proposals to a more detailed stage. There could well be concerns raised by the Environment Agency in respect of the impact of the scheme on the flood storage capacity of the flood plain, the flow of flood waters, and over the safety to both users of the railway and of surrounding residents. These matters would need to be satisfactorily addressed, and the EA are a crucial consultee in the planning process.

The Borough Local Plan

2.16 The Preferred Options Borough Local Plan refers to the proposed Windsor Link Railway. It does not provide a view on the merits of the proposals because the work in support of it is in its early stages and a range of matters require further investigation and consideration.

Links to the Borough Local Plan

- The Borough Local Plan Overall Vision states that '*Transport infrastructure will be in place to allow people to get around ...*' and '*Windsor and Eton town centres and their surrounding area is a thriving visitor destination, attracting visitors from both the local area, the United Kingdom and overseas*' (page 18 of the Preferred Options Borough Local Plan). Opportunities to enhance the connectivity of Windsor and to enhance its role as a major tourist hub will be in line with the vision and as such may receive support.
- The Overall Vision also states that '*The special characteristics of the borough such as the historic environment, the River Thames, woodland and parkland remain part of our heritage.*' Opportunities to conserve and enhance our heritage may receive support. Proposals that threaten to or actually would harm and diminish our heritage, even after all reasonable efforts have been made to mitigate the impact, cannot be supported, unless there are clear public

benefits of sufficient importance to outweigh any harm and which can only be delivered through the scheme proposed.

- The Preferred Options Borough Local Plan contains a list of Objectives (pages 19-21), to deliver the Overall Vision. Relevant Objectives are shown below:

Objective 1

Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the borough's built and natural environment.

- i. Protect the openness of the Green Belt.
- ii. Retain the character of existing settlements through guiding development to appropriate locations and ensuring high quality design of new development.
- iii. Protect the special qualities of the built environment including heritage assets.
- iv. Protect and enhance biodiversity within the borough.

Objective 3

Enable the continued success and evolution of the borough's distinct visitor economy.

- i. Reinforce the role of key tourism centres such as Windsor, Ascot and the River Thames.
- ii. Provide sufficient accommodation and facilities for tourists.
- iii. Identify and promote opportunities for additional tourism related development.

Objective 5

Promote the vitality and viability of our town centres so they are at the heart of our communities.

- i. Promote the town centres of Windsor & Maidenhead as the principal locations for office, retail, tourism and leisure development.
- ii. Support the delivery of the adopted Maidenhead Area Action Plan Development Plan Document.

Objective 7

Minimise the impact of flooding and any impact attributable to climate change.

- i. Promote sustainable design and construction.
- ii. Promote the use of renewable energy.
- iii. Manage flood risk through the location and design of development.

Objective 9

Reduce the need to travel by car in the borough and encourage sustainable modes of transportation.

- i. Locate new development close to offices, shops and local services and facilities.
- ii. Encourage access to safe, convenient and sustainable modes of transportation.

In addition to these Objectives a number of preferred policy options in the Preferred Options Borough Local Plan are of relevance. These preferred policy options deliver the Objectives, and therefore they in turn raise both challenges and opportunities for support, common to those in the objectives. The report submitted as part of the pre-application included reference to policy INF2: Sustainable Transport (page 148). The principle of improving public transport to and around one of the Borough's main towns would be supported under policy INF2. The Local Plan of course must be read as a whole and the combined impacts and effects of the proposal would need to be assessed against a number of policies.

- 2.17** The information and evidence in support of a detailed scheme would need to show there would not be a detrimental impact in relation to the matters covered by the objectives and issues referred to above. There would need to be a clear demonstration of the benefits that the scheme would deliver, again, backed up by evidence. Through the development of evidence to support the case for the Windsor Link Railway, it is recommended that the applicant should clearly and succinctly summarise what wider objectives the scheme will help meet, including at town level, borough level and at a wider than local level.

Process of the Borough Local Plan

- 2.18** The Borough Local Plan may provide an opportunity for the case for the Windsor Link Railway to be explored further and, if found to be acceptable, to be supported. Potentially this could be in the form of an area action plan or perhaps a supplementary planning document (with masterplan). For such

a reference to be included in the Borough Local Plan more information will be required, to allow for an informed view to be taken on whether such an approach is justified.

Information required for the Borough Local Plan process

2.19 The applicant is advised to prepare further evidence to provide a clearer picture of the benefits and potential issues of the scheme and its deliverability, including:

- The deliverability of the proposal – information on the technical deliverability of a proposed scheme including the route of the railway and location of the station, the viability of the scheme (including dependencies on funding streams), evidence of the availability of any sites needed to deliver the scheme and identification of other sites currently with no agreement.
- The impact on the historic environment – information on the potential impact on the historic environment, including archaeology, listed buildings, and long and short views.
- The impact on the road network – information on the impacts of the scheme on the road network and traffic both during construction and on completion (as advised by Highways).
- The impact on parking – information on impacts on current public and coach parking, level of parking needed to serve the development, and deliverable options for parking associated with the scheme.
- The impact on the town centre – information on what impacts (both positive and negative) are expected as part of the proposals.
- Relationship to wider objectives – clear demonstration and explanation of how the scheme relates to objectives for the town, the borough and the wider larger-than-local area.
- Associated development needed to fund the proposals – information on any other developments that are *necessary* to deliver the scheme.
- Associated development – information on any other sites and opportunities that have been identified that could form part of the wider proposals but are not part of the operational land required to deliver and serve the railway link.

2.20 This list is not exhaustive and further implications may be identified that will require further consideration. It is understood that the applicant is making representations in relation to this scheme through the Borough Local Plan process. At this stage, having regard to the scope and level of detail of the information available about the likely impacts, it is unlikely that a detailed policy could be provided within the Local Plan. This may not prevent an Area Masterplan as a Supplementary Document being developed in the future when more detail has been provided and assessed.

Environmental Impact Assessment

2.21 Under the 2011 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, a planning application for the proposed railway would require a Screening opinion from the Council (See schedule 2 of the Regulations- Section 10, Infrastructure Projects). This screening opinion would set out whether an Environmental Impact Assessment would need to be undertaken. However if the scheme is taken forward through the Local Plan or Supplementary Planning Document, it may be that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required. You should note that even if the scheme is taken forward as an allocated site through the local plan or as a SPD document that a screening opinion would still be required prior to the submission of an application. Given the nature and scale of the scheme, it is likely that this scheme would require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

2.22 You should be aware that before the EIA is undertaken, the Local Planning Authority would give a scoping opinion which would confirm what would need to be included in the EIA, however to give you an idea, the information that is likely to be required is set out below.

2.23 It will need to be very clear as to what the scheme is for; for example if it is for the railway scheme only, or for the other associated residential and commercial development? Once this is established, the site, design and size (you would need to be specific about the number of units) of the development proposed will need to be set out. This information/detail needs to be accurate, so that the impacts of the development can be clearly assessed and understood.

2.24 Schedule 4, Part 1 of the legislation explains what should be included within the Environmental Statement, and in summary you would need to set out the following for the Statement:

- Description of the development; physical characteristics of the whole development, land use requirements during construction and operational phases, a description of the main characteristics of the production process, and an estimate of the type and quantity of the expected residues and emissions resulting from the operation of the proposed development
- An outline of the main alternatives that have been studied, and why the scheme has been chosen
- A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected, and in this case this is likely to be population, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, architecture, archaeological heritage, landscape and visual impact, traffic/highways and waste
- The description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, and these would include direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium, long-term, permanent and temporary positive and negative effects
- A description of the measures to prevent, reduce and where possible offset significant affects

Other sites shown for potential redevelopment

2.25 As stated previously, this pre-application does not aim to assess the suitability of developing the other sites within Windsor, but the planning constraints and considerations associated within the sites are summarised below.

Proposed new car park

The things you will need to consider for provision of the car park include:

- The impact on the highway network from vehicles entering and leaving
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Does this conflict with other Council objectives in promoting the use of sustainable transport to the town?
- What is the impact on the residential amenities of occupiers on Arthur Road?
- Development within the flood zone

Alexandra Gardens

This is a strategic park within Windsor, and is used for community events. It is therefore encouraging to see that in the main this area would be retained and enhanced, but you should liaise with the outdoor facilities department about the future aspirations of this area.

In terms of developing the site to the south of the park (**Park Terrace**), you would need to consider the following:

- Impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, which is in close proximity, and on the setting of Alexandra gardens
- Residential Development within flood zone 2- the Sequential Test would need to be passed, and a satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment would need to be submitted
- Considerations about parking for future occupiers of dwellings
- Sufficient provision of affordable housing
- Developer contributions
- It has a number of trees mainly confined around the inner perimeter of the park and includes mature Limes and other large growing trees which may have been planted at the end of the Victorian era. The park boundaries are defined by these trees and associated shrub/hedges which give an attractive green curtain substantially improving the quality of the experience within the park. These trees can also be viewed from the neighbouring road network, The Promenade, Windsor Castle, The River Thames and Thames towpath. The residential buildings of proposed 'Park Terrace' come right up to the edge of the park. The vast majority of trees would have to be removed along the southern boundary due to direct impacts – severing off roots and cutting off sizeable parts of the crowns.

Underground car park to Alexandra Gardens

- In relation to an underground car park underneath Alexandra Gardens, if this is to be pursued a feasibility study would need to be undertaken to demonstrate how it could be achieved without the long term loss of trees and other vegetation on the site.
- Site is within flood zones 2 and 3 the impact on the flood storage capacity of the flood plain and flow of flood waters would need to be assessed

Development of Riverside Car park

This is shown for potential residential development, and key planning considerations include:

- Residential Development within flood zone 2 the Sequential Test would need to be passed, and a satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment would need to be submitted
- Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the setting of Listed Buildings, and views to Windsor Castle
- Impact on highway network
- Archaeology
- Developer contributions

Development of a hotel and boat house adjacent to Christopher Wren Hotel

- Site is situated in flood zone 2
- Impact on the setting of the Christopher Wren Hotel, a Listed Building
- Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and setting of the Thames
- Archaeology
- Impact on the highway network
- Consents required from the EA for a new boat house by the River Thames.

The re-orientation of buildings on Thames Avenue

- The Theatre Royal is a Listed Building, and these buildings are all within the Conservation Area.

Riverside Station

This is shown for redevelopment, possibly as a hotel; the key considerations in developing this site are:

- Is the building to be converted or demolished? Loss of this Listed building would need to be outweighed by significant benefits
- Impact on the character and appearance of Conservation Area
- Archaeology
- Highways implications
- The need for a hotel

Development of car parks to the north east of the Riverside Station

This is shown for mixed use and residential development. It is not specified what uses would be within this mixed use development, but it will be important that any uses complement the core retail area of Windsor and do not detract from this area. Important planning considerations will be:

- Part of the site is in flood zone 2
 - Archaeology
 - Site is adjacent to the Conservation Area
 - Parking and highways implications
 - Provision of affordable housing
 - Setting of the Thames
 - Retail impact on the Town Centre
 - Developer contributions
- o There is a significant line of trees running adjacent to the bank of the River Thames and towpath. These trees provide reciprocal tree cover to that which is on the islands. These trees are a key component of the riparian habitat and are important for wildlife, including bats. These trees provide a pleasant environment for walkers using the public towpath. They help to reinforce the greenery of Home Park, a Grade I Historic Park and Garden, being on the periphery of it.

Redevelopment of Vansittart Industrial Estate

- This area is situated in flood zone 3 (high risk flooding), and so residential development will be resisted unless the Sequential and Exceptions Test can be passed, and a satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment is submitted.
- Highways and parking implications
- Impact on residential amenities

3. THE WAY FORWARD

- 3.1** There is considerable additional assessment required regarding the proposed development, including full heritage assessments, flood risk assessments, environmental impact assessments and traffic assessments. None of which can be concluded until the parameters of the development are defined and the quantum of development necessary to support the infrastructure proposed is finalised. It is only once this detail is known can the aspects of the environment that are likely to be impacted, and their assessment be undertaken. You need to obtain the baseline information to undertake the necessary assessments as a starting point, as this will inform the development proposed. Should you require further advice I would welcome the opportunity to be of further assistance, and I refer you to the scale of fees set out in the Council's Customer guide which can be viewed at: http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/dc_customer_guides.htm
- 3.2** Pre-application advice is given 'without prejudice' and does not bind the Council to a particular outcome.
- 3.3** Should you decide to make an application following this advice then the easiest way to do so is electronically by registering on the Planning Portal at:
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/PpApplications/loginRegister.jsp>
- 3.4** Any planning application will need to be accompanied by specific information before it will be registered. In the absence of any of these requirements your application will be returned to you and no progress will be able to be made on the application. Please take the time to view the requirements on the Council's website at:
http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/dc_local_validation_req.htm before you submit an application.