

Hungerford Station Regeneration Development Brief



Hungerford Town Council

September 2012

JACKSON PLANNING

Hungerford Station Area Regeneration Development Brief

JPL Ref: HTCC 2012/001

LPA Ref:

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Date of Issue: 27 September 2012 -Final

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I. Summary

- 1.1 This document has been prepared to provide a clear concept of the potential for improvements to Hungerford Railway Station area, which is the subject of a number of competing pressures for development. This document is a starting point as it expresses the views of Hungerford Town Council.
- 1.2 The document has been subject to formal consultation with local people, West Berkshire Council and those property interests affected by the brief.
- 1.3 This final brief is presented to West Berkshire Council for adoption so that it will be used for development management and as part of the evidence for detailed plan making for the station. There is wide support from the community in the ideas and concepts for the Station in this brief and this should therefore be material to any planning applications and planning proposals for the site and its setting.
- 1.4 The brief advocates the regeneration of the station area by:
 - the creation of a revised layout of the forecourt to create an improved transport interchange for all modes of transport;
 - raising the design quality of redevelopments surrounding the station forecourt area, notably Oakes, St John Ambulance & West Rowlands;
 - overcoming access issues that are the result of complex land ownership/ access constraints;
 - develop residential units, probably flats the Oakes and St John Ambulance site; to provide natural surveillance in the area.
- 1.5 The brief also considers longer term, more radical and innovative, solutions beyond the immediate Station interchange site. Throughout this brief this is referred to as the setting to the Station site.
- 1.6 The brief examines the planning policy for the site in detail and the Town Council hope this brief will go on to influence the future planning policy for the site and its setting.
- 1.7 A series of actions for the Town Council to consider are included in the brief to aid progress on the project.

2. Introduction

Location

- 2.1 The Hungerford Station area brief concentrates on the immediate station forecourt and operational station area, the Oakes Brothers site and the St John Ambulance site. A plan of the site that is subject of this brief is included as Figure 1. The wider area that was considered is referred to throughout this brief as the setting is also shown on Figure 1.

Town Council

- 2.2 The Town Council commissioned the project in response to concerns regarding potential redevelopment projects surrounding the Station and to respond to a desire from the community recognised in the Town Plan that the Station area needed improving.

The Brief's Purpose

- 2.3 The Town Council wish to stimulate and facilitate appropriate development and set a vision for the area to help inform the planning authority, West Berkshire Council, of the local aspirations for this site.



- 2.4 It's the 150 anniversary of the rail line through Hungerford and there is huge pride and enthusiasm about the railway. This has been recently illustrated by the steam train 'Bittern' that stopped at the station as shown on the picture above. This pride is not matched by the station facilities and the area around it.

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- 2.5 It is a busy station with an estimated 270,000 passengers in the year 2010/11. It is classed as an 'F1 station' from the Better Stations Report of 2009 which would normally only apply to stations with up to 250,000 passengers.
- 2.6 The main objective of this brief is to kick start a better future for the Station and reflect concerns that this area needs to be addressed comprehensively to secure the best possible outcome. The document has also considered briefly wider issues of redevelopment of the sites adjacent to the Station area.
- 2.7 The vision for the brief is as follows:

The Town Council's vision for Hungerford Station is to:

- **regenerate the Station area to create an attractive gateway to the town and AONB;**
- **act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of sites surrounding the station and;**
- **create a high quality transport interchange for Hungerford and its associated villages in West Berkshire and Wiltshire**

- 2.8 The ability of West Berkshire Council to adopt the brief will depend on a number of factors discussed in section 3 below. It is possible the brief may need to remain as Non statutory guidance and more of a discussion document/ evidence base to help the Town Council formulate a response to planning applications and use it to gain assistance from WBC in achieving the vision for the Station Area.
- 2.9 It is also hoped that the brief will assist the landowners and developers involved in the area to understand the wider aspirations and vision for the area.
- 2.10 The brief will also help to inform the local community, both residents and businesses about the possibilities for development and regeneration at the Station and should stimulate engagement in the important forthcoming planning decisions that will affect the future of the Town.

Contributors

- 2.11 The document has been produced by Jackson Planning Ltd in conjunction with the members of the Hungerford Town Council and the following stakeholders;

Town Council

- Cllr Roger Thompson
- Cllr Martin Crane - Mayor
- Cllr Charlotte Podger
- Cllr Terry Harding,
- Cllr Richard Hudson - Transport

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- Cllr David Liddiard
- Cllr Margaret Wilson
- Cllr David Small
- Clare Barnes - Clerk

And the following stakeholders:

- Henry Oliver – Director of North Wessex Downs AONB
- Greg Furr - Constable of Town & Manor
- Rachel Furr – Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Hewer – West Berks Council District Councillor
- David Holtby – West Berks Council District Councillor
- Anthony Buckwell – Tourism and Marketing Working Party
- Chris Scorey – Chairman of Town Plan Refresh
- Andrew Wilkinson – Chairman of Weldon & Waring Ltd (Holding company of Oakes Bros Ltd)
- Phil Brown –Network Rail
- Simon Frost –St John’s Ambulance
- Michael Rowland – Station Industrial Estate
- Alison Stone - Station Manager GWR

2.12 Advice has been sought from West Berkshire Council and included discussions with Liz Alexander and Rachael Lancaster. Neil Stacey and Bruce Lousley also gave advice.

2.13 Network rail have been consulted on the possible closure of Hungerford level crossing.

2.14 The development brief has been subject to public consultation this is discussed in below.

3. Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1 On March 27 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued and came into force with immediate effect. The NPPF forms the Government's main guidance for planning policy in England. Planning Legislation remains in place and the primacy of the development plan remains at the heart of planning policy. The NPPF has introduced new considerations that give local councils more power to determine their own future with the demise of the Regional Spatial Strategies. It is now within the power of neighbourhoods led by Town or Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Groups, to produce their own plans for an area. The NPPF also creates a new golden thread, which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which local planning authorities must consider in plan making and decision taking.

The Development Plan

- 3.2 The Core Strategy for West Berkshire was found sound in June 2012 and was adopted on 16 July 2012. The Council have now begun work on the other part of the Local Plan for the District which is proposed to be a Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document which will start with some public participation in September 2012 with adoption June 2015. The work in this brief on Hungerford Station can feed into the preparation of this plan.
- 3.3 Hungerford are in the process of producing a Town Housing Growth Review which aims to delivery appropriate development in the town and to input to the WBC DPD.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 3.4 West Berkshire intends to introduce CIL by April 2014 when it will no longer be possible to gain pooled contributions from development without CIL. Preparations are underway by WBC for an economic viability study into CIL, to be launched ASAP. Subject to the study a draft charging schedule will be released for consultation Spring 2013. CIL can be used for projects like the Hungerford Station interchange if considered a priority by West Berkshire Council.

Core Strategy - Employment Policy

- 3.5 Employment Policy is critical to the future of the whole Station area, as it has been identified as a Protected Employment Area (PEA) in the adopted Core Strategy. The policy CS9 is reproduced in appendix A.
- 3.6 The CS9 policy prevents redevelopment of the sites around the station for other land uses as it is identified as a protected employment area, unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal does not negatively impact upon the economy.

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- 3.7 The policy was developed following the 2007 study of employment floorspace, which considered District wide demand and supply issues. The Town Council believes that despite acceptance at the Core Strategy inquiry this study is now out of date as it is over 5 years old, particularly given the global economic downturn and the rapid change to employment practice that has, is and will occur over the life of the Core Strategy. It is important that any site allocations for the town are considered in the light of an updated employment position for Hungerford as the evidence base does not reflect current investment decisions.
- 3.8 In summary the study found that in Hungerford the sites at the Station currently provide important employment opportunities in local area but are unlikely to be suitable for further expansion/intensification and thus this areas is limited in its ability to meet the future requirements for B1 (office) uses. Demand is likely to be relatively small scale compared to sites at Newbury/Thatcham and Theale.
- 3.9 In addition the study found that demand for B8 use (storage and distribution) was a result of the need for distribution activities at an increasing scale as a result of a greater volume of goods being traded. Growth in employment levels is not expected to match the growth in trade in this sector; the growth in trade is expected to be matched by the increased efficient use of warehousing floorspace. The expectation is that employment density in the warehousing sector to remain constant over the period to 2026.
- 3.10 The main issue identified in the study was whether the available supply was in the right place and of the right type to contribute towards meeting future requirements for warehouse and storage. The study recommends that if B2 and B8 employment land that is proven to be surplus to requirements in less suitable locations (for example through a marketing test) it could be considered for alternative uses, including B1 uses. However, careful consideration will need to be given to each site and its suitability to meet these other uses. This needs to be considered on a site-by-site basis. Should it be determined that the site is no longer attractive to the B8 market and is not suitable for B1 uses it could be considered for alternative non- employment uses.
- 3.11 Any reuse of the sites around the station will be considered the criteria of policy CS9. The Town Council's concerns may be addressed as West Berkshire are committed to a comprehensive assessment of existing PEAs and their boundaries as part of the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD in order to provide a balanced portfolio of sites to meet future demand. Part of the solution might be the identification of more appropriate sites for B8 and B1 use. This might free up the station sites for residential use.

Core Strategy - Housing Policy

- 3.12 Hungerford is defined as a Rural Service Centre in the Core Strategy. Rural Service Centres provide the role of a focal point for the surrounding villages and rural areas in terms of the provision of services and facilities and will accommodate some additional housing. The level of development will depend on the character and function of the settlement and on assessment of the potential sites available for housing.
- 3.13 Area Delivery Plan Policy 5 covers the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty sets out that in the western part of the AONB, development will be focused in Hungerford as the more sustainable rural service centre. The policy also describes the factors which will help to inform decisions about the level of growth to be allocated to the town. This exercise will be completed in the site allocations and delivery development plan document. West Berkshire's published Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has rejected the sites around the station as not available because of the restrictive employment policy, this does not mean that they are not capable of being developed for housing if the employment structure of the area can accommodate employment needs satisfactorily elsewhere.
- 3.14 The consultation on the brief has confirmed that there is support from some of the site owners, developers, commercial agents and the community for residential use on the employment sites at the Station. The survey results were 81% in favour of residential.

AONB Management Plan

- 3.15 The North Wessex Downs AONB management plan recognises the lack of identity of the North Wessex Downs and poor understanding amongst the wider population of the opportunities that it offers for quiet recreation and green tourism. As Hungerford is a key gateway and arrival point it is suggested that the Station signs refer to the North Wessex Downs.
- 3.16 In addition the Management plan includes at Objective 43: the aim to maximise opportunities for sustainable and integrated access opportunities. This would suggest a transport interchange at the station was consistent with this objective.

Quality Design SPD.

- 3.17 West Berkshire Council has produced a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) series on design and sustainability issues. The SPD comprises several documents which form the design guide series 'Quality Design - West Berkshire'. The series has been produced to help developers to create places of high quality design which are sustainable, secure and accessible to all. The SPD series applies to all new developments across the District, including residential and commercial.

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- 3.18 On 19th June 2006 West Berkshire Council formally adopted the 'Quality Design - West Berkshire' Supplementary Planning Document series. The SPD is now part of the West Berkshire Local Development Framework and is a material consideration in all planning applications.
- 3.19 The document does not contain site specific advice on design issues for Hungerford Station.

Hungerford Town Plan/ Town Plan Refresh

- 3.20 The local community produced a Town Plan in 2005. The plan was the product of extensive community engagement and collaboration. It included a series of workshops, engaging with all groups in the town and there was also a detailed questionnaire that received a 36% response from households. The plan sought improvements at the Station. It also sought the redevelopment of industrial areas at the Station and moving them to Charnham Park.
- 3.21 The refresh of the Town Plan in 2012 has confirmed that there is strong support for improvements at the Station. The recent survey went to every household and there a high response of 46%. Of these, 78% stated that it was important or very important to seek major improvements to the rail station. There was also a 95% agreeing to improving rail and bus services and an interchange improvement would help with this.

Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.22 The Localism Act 2011 has introduced the potential for a neighbourhood plan to be prepared by the local community and the recent NPPF recognises the role such plans can take in shaping planning policy by communities for their area rather than imposed policy from the District Council.
- 3.23 To be approved, neighbourhood plans will need to conform with the strategic content of the local plan, as well as with national guidance. Crucially, although they will be allowed to accommodate more housing or infrastructure than proposed by the local plan, they will not be able to provide for less.
- 3.24 The new role for neighbourhoods in the planning process is unprecedented, and allows people to articulate their wishes for their area in a way that the planning system understands. There are major hurdles for local groups to surmount before they get a plan or an order in place
- 3.25 West Berkshire Council, as the local planning authority, has a duty to provide 'technical advice and support' to communities preparing neighbourhood development. It could include gathering evidence; help with facilitation or advice on consultation. It can – but does not have to include financial support.

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- 3.26 Once the plan is written, the local planning authority needs to check it against the legislation and regulations. This check isn't about saying whether the content is right or wrong, but about the consultation and procedure followed. If the plan is acceptable, the council has to arrange (and pay for) an independent examination. This will look at how the plan complies with the core strategy, national policies, and any adjoining neighbourhood plans. If it passes the examination West Berkshire Council needs to arrange (and pay for) a referendum on the plan. The referendum can go beyond the neighbourhood area if its impacts will be felt more widely. If the plan is agreed by a majority, then West Berkshire Council then adopts the neighbourhood plan.
- 3.27 The possibility to produce a neighbourhood plan is open to the Town Council and Local Community. It would need to cover all issues in the town, as the Town Plan and Town Plan Refresh have done. It would be not be appropriate for the neighbourhood plan to only consider the Station. However, the work in this brief could form part of a neighbourhood plan for the Town. Another difficulty is the existing employment policy for the Station area, which makes it difficult to consider other uses on the sites around the station as the neighbourhood plan must be in conformity with the Council's development plan, at the time of adoption. .
- 3.28 On balance the Town Council has decided not to progress with a Neighbourhood Plan following the advice from West Berkshire Council.

4. Analysis of Site and Context

Location

- 4.1 Hungerford Station is located to the north east side of the town and is set back from the town centre and main thoroughfares. The railway is located on the lower slope towards the Kennet and Avon Canal. It sits at a low point with development to the south positioned stepping down the slope.
- 4.2 The site sits within a very attractive context between attractive residential streets. The Conservation area is to the west. The Common and access to it is to the east. The Kennet and Avon canal is to the north. In this regard the station and its setting are of poor quality and are incongruous to the very attractive parts of the town that it is located within.
- 4.3 The unattractive nature of the station forecourt is reinforced by poor quality unattractive, but functional, industrial units, which bound the site to the north, east and derelict land to the south. See photo sheet page 12.

Condition

- 4.4 The site suffers poor physical environmental quality and has a number of detractors from inappropriate developments and a degree of neglect and under investment. The paraphernalia associated with the functional use of the site as a railway; in particular the level crossing, leads to a very cluttered appearance. This is due to the dominance of pole mounted cameras and lights.
- 4.5 The derelict nature of the Oakes Brothers site adds to air of neglect, the large mound of demolition waste and the large concrete block barriers that have been introduced to prevent illegal parking reinforce this.
- 4.6 The unused St John Ambulance building adds to air of neglect and dereliction. Parked cars dominate the whole station forecourt in a most unattractive way. The use of property boundaries has led to the introduction of car parking spaces in a haphazard way, which leads to a feeling of clutter as cars project at different points.
- 4.7 Surface treatment is of very poor quality with property boundaries marked out in different materials and hatchings. The surfaces around the Station Road junction are particularly poor.
- 4.8 The area has little in the way of redeeming planting in the immediate station vicinity. To the south are the unattractive conifers at the Railway Tavern and St John's Ambulance site (and to the rear on Firgrove Court). To the north is the planted laurel hedge adjacent to the platform.

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Site - Main Issues

- 4.9 An appraisal of the site is shown as plan I.
- 4.10 There is **no sense of arrival** either a passenger alighting from a train or as a visitor to the Station. The site does not form a gateway function. This is reinforced by the lack of a proper station building.
- 4.11 The **visual clutter** associated with the station forecourt is very unattractive and other clutter in the area reinforces this. The location of the recycling facility in the station road car park adds to the feeling that the area is poor quality so it can accept more urban paraphernalia.
- 4.12 **Access to the area by vehicle and on foot/ cycle is very poor.** This explored more in section 5. The level crossing is unsuitable for those with limited mobility to access both platforms. The overbridge is only accessed by steps so is not Disability Discrimination Act compliant. The Equalities Act also needs to be considered.
- 4.13 **The site lacks enclosure.** The long thin nature of the site is reinforced by pattern of linear development, has not addressed enclosure of the space. This is also undermined by the current derelict nature of the Oakes Brothers site as the enclosure once afforded by the building is now lost. This results in poor townscape quality.
- 4.14 The high quality townscape of the Town Centre in particular the Town Hall is barely visible amongst the masts, barriers and cameras mounted on poles. Less clutter around the level crossing and station entrance would improve long views afforded to passengers as they alight from trains and improve the overall ambience on arrival.
- 4.15 **Streetscape-** The whole streetscape environment is very poor quality surfaces and street furniture. A co-ordinated approach to the surface treatment and complementary street furniture would enhance the experience of the space. A comprehensive streetscape design is required to achieve this. To start this process an audit of superfluous street furniture and a review to see which signs and elements could be combined would provide a very useful start to this process.
- 4.16 **Poor quality approvals** – Both the recent approvals for schemes within the Station area are of poor quality design that does not contribute to the quality of place. Hungerford Town Council expressed concerns about the design of the scheme on the St John Ambulance site, the Local Planning Authority did consider this in their appraisal but they felt they could not refuse it. If the development brief had been adopted there would be more support for better decision-making. There is no cohesion to design of the area with an impression that anything goes. The two schemes if implemented together would create a very jarring scheme.

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- 4.17 The transport **interchange lacks definition**. There is no proper space for set down, short waiting for pick up and spaces for buses/ coaches or taxis. A formally laid out transport interchange can define space for specific users. This is likely to be at the expense of some long-term parking and as the result of collaboration between the various/ owners of the station forecourt area.
- 4.18 The station seems very unrelated to the **Town Centre**. This could be a function of its use as a commuter station rather than to attract shoppers/ tourists.

Setting –Main Issues

- 4.19 There is no sense of arrival to a market town within the AONB. The town is an important gateway to the Wessex Downs and the experience should better reflect the quality of the environment found within the AONB. The link to the town centre is attractive along the Station Road car park along the Cuttings but fizzles out at the level crossing. Any redesign should make a positive link to the town centre in terms of route and signage.
- 4.20 The station site is close to Hungerford Common in a sense of distance and potential for immediate access. Could a footpath connection be made through the Station Industrial Estate (Rowland's Land) to the common? Longer term Redevelopment of this site might lend itself to provision of such a link.
- 4.21 The Kennet and Avon Canal is an important tourist resource and attractive feature in its own right is very close to the Station but has a very poor quality connection to it. The access is private and has a rural character. Should the area between the Station and the canal come forward for development a better access could be secured to the canal as part of the redevelopment but that should not detract from its rural charm.
- 4.22 **Saxon Industries** to the north of the Station is a large building but with fairly low employment density. Access is extremely poor for the HGVs that service the building, potentially creating a hazard on the level-crossing as vehicles must wait whilst they turn and exit through Everland Road. The building is poor quality design and external finish and makes nothing of the site location adjacent to the canal and Hungerford Common. The site is level and flat and has some mature vegetation. Redevelopment of this site has a number of significant issues to deal with but primarily access and loss of employment land. Given the use of the site by HGVs, an alternative use that had less vehicle impact might be considered more favourably. Employment density is low, but the business is understood to be successful, so it is likely that an alternative premises/ site would need to be found. Residential use might be suitable here if the design solution can control the aspect of any dwellings so they overlook Canal/ Common to achieve suitable residential amenity.

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- 4.23 **Hungerford Service Centre** – Like Saxon Industries this centre provides a useful service in the town but is not ideally located. Limited space on the site means that there are often cars parked along Everland Road. The site is unattractively finished in painted concrete blocks. Any improvement of this visually important corner site would assist in raising the quality of the area.
- 4.24 **Land Between Saxon and Platform** – This is a significant area of retained land north of the station. This has an unkempt and unattractive appearance with industrial fencing that has been damaged. There is also a brick building and parking for a few vehicles. The site is very sloped and is unlikely to have development potential. Improvements to planting and the boundary fence would assist the area.
- 4.25 **Railway Tavern** – This is the most attractive building in the station area. Although it is not listed it should be considered a heritage asset. The attractive traditional barn has been usefully converted to an outdoor smoking shelter. The one detractor on the site is the row of conifers. These would probably have been planted to protect the pub garden from the Oakes Bros site. Once the site is more sympathetically developed they could be removed, as they appear alien. Some more appropriate replacement planting would add to the quality of this site and the station area. The frontage is dominated by parking which is unfortunate as this is an attractive building however, the site otherwise has no dedicated parking for customers.
- 4.26 **Station Yard Industrial Estate (Rowland)** – to the east of the Station. This is a functional business estate, which provides popular accommodation for business users. The difficult site shape leading to a small triangle of land at the extreme western end of the ownership is compromised and in turn compromises the use of space in the Station forecourt. The redevelopment proposal for this end of the site approved by West Berkshire Council does not address this issue (a critique of the design is given below). Existing buildings are two storey and of brick construction with profile sheet roofing. The area lacks cohesion and quality. Planting and landscape improvements would assist as the area is very harsh and unrelieved. The key part of this site is the redevelopment area closest to the station. If redevelopment proposals are to come forward the opportunity should be taken to achieve a building at the west end of the site to create an attractive ‘visual stop’ and enclose the station forecourt. The same footprint as that approved could be achieved and could create a much better offer. The building should be of high quality design in quality facing brick and slate (or slate equivalent –small modules). The building could have a contemporary design style, but seek to replicate the fine grain of the conservation area. It is unlikely that residential use on this site would provide a satisfactory level of amenity for residents given proximity to the railway line. Especially as any single aspect dwellings would face an embankment.

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- 4.27 **Oakes Bros** – This is a now a derelict site. The site has a significant slope from north to south. Access to the substation will need to be maintained. The prominence of the Railway Tavern needs to be respected in any redevelopment. The owners have submitted a planning application (12/01229/FUL) which is currently under consideration for the development of the site for temporary car parking for the Station for three years.
- 4.28 The Town Council should regard the temporary proposal as an opportunity to consider implementing improvements to the station forecourt and should consider the following. Could the temporary parking be set back into the site to allow negotiations to continue to secure the station forecourt area as a transport interchange? Seeking some planting and landscape improvements to the site frontage, which might form part of the eventual station forecourt scheme? Temporary uses have a tendency for permanence so the Town Council and West Berkshire Council should not miss the opportunity for visual improvements on the frontage.
- 4.29 Longer-term redevelopment of Oakes Bros site was considered at the workshop, and in the options shown in section 5. Consideration was given for potential for residential reuse. This relies on the policy constraint being overcome that prevents loss of employment use. Two illustrative schemes in options 1A and Option 2 showed either flats or town houses on the frontage with parking behind. A further option would be to have parking on the ground floor with development above, but this would need active use on the ground floor to give a frontage to the interchange. The site's level change could facilitate this solution, but would involve significant costs that would not be borne in the current market.
- 4.30 **St John Ambulance Site** –The building is definitely redundant to SJA needs and they are keen to dispose of it. SJA is a charity and are required by law to get best value for their properties when they are sold. At present they have been advised that they are likely to obtain the best value through selling the property on the open market with the benefit of planning consent for residential flats. Planning consent was granted for the replacement flats scheme.
- 4.31 The site is landlocked by other properties it is subject to a ransom arrangement with Network Rail for access to the site via the station car park. SJA have indicated they are open to proposals that might overcome these constraints.

5. Transportation Issues

5.1 **Passenger Volumes.** The latest annual statistics on passengers using the rail station are 270,000, based on 2010/11 data. That would be 135,000 leaving and 135,000 arriving. This equates to about 500 people using the station each weekday.

5.2 It should be noted that this is probably an under estimate as passengers are not bound to purchase a ticket at the station and many do not. By comparison Bedwyn has 83,000, Kintbury 64,000 and Newbury 1.4 million.

5.3 The rail station is currently classed as a 'F1' station from the Better Stations Report of 2009. This classification applies to unmanned station of up to 250,000. Now that value has been exceeded an upgrade of the classification to D should be applied and with it the appropriate infrastructure improvements.

5.4 **Highway Authority** - The consideration of transport issues falls primarily to West Berkshire Council (WBC) who are the highway authority in this area. However, there are a number of other agencies involved including Network Rail and First Great Western, the present rail operator. The Town Council also has important local role to play in transportation issues. WBC do have some limited capital funding and project funding through LTP3 and Section 106.

5.5 **Pedestrian access/ Vehicular Access** – All types of access to the station are poor. Access is difficult with the approach from station road being narrow and steep. Turning in at the junction of Station Road and Park Street is hazardous due to poor visibility. This could be resolved by a pavement build-out at the junction of Station Road and Park Street. This would serve five purposes it would provide more pavement on Park Street, it would force vehicles to slow down at this point and calm traffic speeds, it would force large vehicle away from the pavement edge and approach Station Road more appropriately, it would improve visibility at the junction and it would improve the amenity of the dwelling on Park Street.

5.6 An alternative would be to take one metre from the front garden of house on the junction for a footway to improve visibility and this may require the removal of a tree. Projects of this kind can be financed by WBC through the capital programme under LTP3.

5.7 **Cycle parking** - A number of respondents have highlighted that there is insufficient secure, covered cycle parking. This project could be funded by WBC through the capital programme under LTP3 or LSTF

5.8 **Level Crossing** - In response to an email with regard to possible closure Phil Brown of Network Rail stated that:

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“Network Rail is keen to look at closure of level crossings wherever possible, although of course this is based on risk and cost analysis, i.e. if a crossing is high risk then funding is directed at mitigations which could include closure. I need to sit down with the team that look at this side of the business to understand what concerns, if any, we have about this crossing”.

5.9 Access Audit -An access audit was carried out in May 2011. The report is helpful in as much as it looked at some detailed access issues with an emphasis on disability. This seems to be driven in part as a result of the need to comply with legislation rather than a holistic approach to high quality design. Some of the proposals for example the inclusion of hazard marking as recommended and more signs would just add clutter and make the station look worse.

5.10 Transport Interchange – Plans to create a dedicated transport interchange are shown below. The interchange should be improved and contain as a minimum:

- Proper circulation and turning space for cars and buses
- Dedicated taxi rank for two vehicles
- Kiss and Ride (set down)
- Bus/ Coach waiting facility (2 spaces)
- Co-ordinated street furniture, signage and lighting
- Street Tree Planting of very high quality (no shrubs – litter problems)
- Cycle Parking – covered and secure
- Improved waiting shelters on the platforms

Desirable Features Include:

- Station Building to include ticket machines, information, waiting area, small kiosk and toilet.

5.11 Parking spaces –Long-stay parking spaces have recently been introduced to the station forecourt. However this has been carried out in a poor fashion with obtrusive signing and poor layout, which exacerbates the cluttered feel of the site. About 70 spaces are now available. If the transport interchange were implemented this could reduce availability, but this would depend on the preferred layout design. Relevant to this are the proposals for long-stay temporary parking at the Station on the Oakes site. See the next paragraph below.

5.12 Temporary Parking – A planning application for 98 temporary spaces has been submitted by the owner.. Given the loss of the protected employment land it

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is likely the consent would only be temporary. In the longer term redevelopment that offered long stay parking with development above might be feasible in a buoyant commercial market. With present market conditions this is very unlikely to be viable. Members of the town council supported this solution. There appears to be support for temporary parking, which would improve the sites' appearance. Given the possible long term nature of temporary parking visual improvements to the site frontage should be sought as part of the planning application. This could act as the first phase of implementation of the station forecourt improvements.

5.13 Land adjacent to northern platform- Discussions with Network rail have confirmed that there is potential to lay out this area with landscaping and some additional long stay car parking. This may assist with capacity but would potentially increase vehicle movements across the level crossing.

5.14 Through Ticketing – Bus Plus scheme. Hungerford Station was not considered feasible as part of the bus plus scheme by the bus operator. Presumably the demand would be too low as there are so few bus services.

6. Regeneration Objectives –The Vision

The Vision

- **The Town Council’s vision for Hungerford Station is to:**
- **regenerate the Station area to create an attractive gateway to the town and AONB;**
- **act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of sites surrounding the station and;**
- **create a high quality transport interchange for Hungerford and its associated villages in West Berkshire and Wiltshire**

Work together for a better outcome

- 6.1 Town Council to facilitate partnership (through this brief) to ensure the layout is not driven by arbitrary land ownership and access constraints – would be a missed opportunity. Needs strong lead from Town Council to act as Champion/ seek a Champion within WBC
- 6.2 Challenge the Agencies involved in the area to work towards a common goal – especially West Berkshire Council, Network Rail, rail operator currently First Great Western. Highway, planning and transport issues are key to achieving a better outcome.

Create a station area that reflects the quality of the Hungerford and the AONB

- 6.3 Create a true sense of arrival - the site does not reflect the quality of the town and is a poor experience for residents, commuters and visitors. Every opportunity for improvement should be taken from the variety of potential projects within and around the station.

Use the redevelopment potential of sites close to the Station to regenerate this area

- 6.4 The need to identify sites for housing and employment should be grasped as an opportunity to regenerate the station

Raise the design ambition for the area

- 6.5 At best recent approved proposals in the area might be viewed as mediocre, at worst they are potentially damaging to the site and it’s setting as they are discordant in the area and discordant with one another. Using this brief, with community endorsement, the design ambition of the area can be raised by applying the design principles.

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- 6.6 Think radically, treat the interchange as a single space, and work to overcome ownership and access constraints. Even if it can only be achieved in part, ensure that schemes that do come forward make the best of the area. Don't accept second best.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Throughout the production of this development brief the content and ideas have been subject to wide discussions and consultation. Three open meetings have been held in the Town Hall. These workshops are reported below.
- 7.2 Public consultation on the draft brief was held for six weeks and the results are reported below.
- 7.3 Various meetings have been held with the stakeholders and in particular the with First Great Western, the franchise operator, and Network Rail alongside the developer of the Oakes site. This liaison resulted in positive change and a commitment to resolve the complex landownership issues which have proved a stumbling block to redevelopment in the past by involvement with very senior staff in the relevant organisations.

Issues from Workshop

- 7.4 Three workshops were held on 18th April and May 17th and 25th July 2012 with key invited stakeholders. At the first workshop broader options were tabled and considered although none were highlighted as preferred at this stage. At the second workshop the draft layouts had been worked up and discussed. The third workshop considered practical solutions and was a catalyst to the high level meeting with Network Rail and First Great Western.
- 7.5 The main ideas are listed below.
 - Co-ordinated approach to redevelopment; look to achieve regeneration of the area through the project.
 - Mixed use on sites adjacent to Station – not a site for retail, as this could compete with the town.
 - Land Assembly – key to unlocking the regeneration- HTC to act as facilitators to bring about change and get landowners to work together.
 - Phased development –possible to start with smaller element of the scheme and work towards solution.
 - Retain as much long stay parking as possible –deal with pricing issue as it is considered too cheap for long-stay and attracts rail users from a distance.
 - Extend the consideration of the brief to whole of Rowland's ownership, as they are keen to redevelop.

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- As part of the regeneration Project, find alternative employment sites if alternative uses are promoted here.
- Access Issues – generally poor for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Station Parking could be provided on Oakes site with office use above.
- Tesco's - possible site swap to gain larger store and provide employment on existing site.

Results of Public Consultation

- 7.6 HTC carried out a six-week consultation on the draft development brief. There was a reasonable response with almost 50 surveys returned. In summary the results were as follows:
- 97% supported improving station interchange;
 - Some concern about loss of parking, but still 79% supported a modest loss of 15 spaces;
 - 76% support for 'Hungerford Heart of AONB' sign at the station;
 - Rail station building 61% in favour and the main concerns are about reality and cost/maintenance of a new building;
 - 81% in favour of residential on Oakes;
 - 81% against level crossing closure.
- 7.7 These results are an important part of the considerations of those making decisions about the future of the Station; although a modest sample there are strong views. These are important for the policy makers considering the future of development of the station.
- 7.8 The draft brief has been scrutinised by officers of WBC to ensure that it is consistent with planning policies and is a fair reflection of possibilities for the station area. Although not all ideas have had full support from WBC officers this brief represents the majority view from consultation, including those with formal control of the sites and reflects Hungerford Town Council's ambitions for the area, which remain high.
- 7.9 As the proposals do have wider support they represent an important consideration in the future of the area, and it is hoped that this will weigh in favour with WBC when considering adoption of this development brief.

8. The Brief for Regeneration

8.1 A number of options have been identified for the interchange and surrounding land uses. The preferred scheme is presented on Figure 3. Key aspects of this layout are:

- An improved interchange layout providing for all types of transport with some landscaping;
- Residential developments at the Oakes and St Johns that are well designed;
- The west Rowlands site as office with a relocation and improved design;
- Improvements to the Station Road / Park Street junction.

8.2 The following part of the report is divided into three sections:

A: The interchange: the main station interchange/ forecourt;

B: The adjacent land uses which provide setting to the site and

C: Highway access improvements.

A: The Interchange

8.3 **A dedicated transport interchange** – Space is required to set out a formal transport interchange. Two main option plans are included here the preferred Option and Option 2. They both require some land assembly and Option Two shows the implications of a bus turning circle. Both of these will have significant interchange improvements that include:

- proper circulation and turning space for cars and buses
- a dedicated taxi rank for two vehicles
- Kiss and Ride (set down)
- bus/ coach waiting facility (2 spaces)
- co-ordinated street furniture
- Improved signage and lighting
- Signage with ‘Welcome to Hungerford: Heart of North Wessex Downs’
- street tree planting of very high quality (no shrubs – litter problems),
- cycle parking – covered and secure
- Improved waiting shelters on the platforms

Other Options

8.7 Option Zero - While not preferred in the longer term the Option Zero layout shows the interchange and the two recent schemes approved for Rowland's site and the St John's Ambulance site. It also indicates a possible layout for temporary parking on the Oakes Bros site. This layout respects the known land ownership constraints elements of this layout are likely to be developed. The transport interchange is located on land under Network Rail Land- although it is acknowledged that some sites have access across this land.

8.8 In many ways this is a do minimum option that the town maybe faced with in practice for a number of years. The Oakes site as a temporary car park, possible flats built on the St Johns site and an office on the Rowlands site.



8.9 Investigate closing the Level Crossing – While a potentially radical suggestion there can be no doubt that the level crossing is a potentially dangerous feature of any location. It is not a public highway. It would appear that it has prescriptive or private rights that may be possible to overcome, as alternative vehicular access via the high street is possible. The crossing for pedestrians would need to be maintained and this would need ramps or a lift. The benefits of permanent closure could be significant.

B: Adjacent Land

Design Principles

- 8.10 There is an opportunity to raise the design quality and create new character that reflects scale/ proportion and grain of Hungerford but has contemporary language. The site needs a bold simplicity. The station interchange plans encapsulate this, bold as it, ignores ownership, but simple in that it is ordered and effective with a suggested simple unifying palette of materials.

Scale

- 8.11 The general scale of development within Hungerford is two storey, with some limited examples of three storey where roof space is utilised. However, where there are level differences taller structures can exploit the change in levels. It is recommended that for most of the site only **two storey development is appropriate**, generally with pitched roofs. Where these occur use of the roof space with sympathetic dormer/ rooflights is acceptable. Given the sloping nature and level differences on the **Oakes site a three storey building** that utilised the lower level on the station interchange and excavated back into the site would assist with assimilating this bulk on this site. There is a **general terracing down the valley side** towards the canal that should be observed in all the buildings across the valley.
- 8.12 Two illustrative schemes (below) showing two approaches to the Oakes site were considered at the workshop. These are a good illustration of grain, narrow bays, frequent openings. This helps to break up large buildings.

Grain

- 8.13 Hungerford is a 'fine grained' town. This means that buildings should have numerous openings at the ground floor level to animate the street and avoid dead frontages. 'Fine grain' generally means narrow bays of vertical emphasis with frequent windows and doors.



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- 8.14** These examples above used at the workshop show two possible approaches to the Oakes site the top one replicating the scheme approved on the St John's Ambulance site, and bottom image is a terrace of town houses of a similar scale to those in Park Street. Note how the frequent openings reduce the apparent scale of the building.

Townscape

- 8.15** Every opportunity should be taken to improve the townscape experience. This about using enclosure and visual devices to create comfortable space. At present the site has no enclosure and little in the way of quality to anchor the site. The Railway Tavern is the only feature of the site that makes a positive contribution. The opportunity to create a new visual stop and local landmark should be exploited at the western end of the Rowland's site.

Building Materials

- 8.16 Palette of materials** - The Town Council could select suitable materials, which could be chosen by for suitability both in terms of fit with Hungerford and for its sustainability performance. Recommend the use of soft orange /red facing brick for elevations and slate for roof as main materials and add a limited additional range of accent materials.
- 8.17 Paving-** Like facing materials, choice of paving and consistency of application is important. Tarmac can act as a unifying surface if broken up with high quality materials such as conservation kerbs, granite setts and smaller concrete paving units. A simple grey colour palette that does not compete with the buildings is often the best option.
- 8.18 Street Furniture** – A good suite of street furniture designed to go together is often the simplest way to act as a unifying feature in an area. As the site is outside the conservation area the use of 'heritage' style furniture is not necessarily appropriate. A simple and bold solution would be to use more contemporary finishes simple dark grey or brushed stainless steel with timber seats.
- 8.19 Lighting** –Participants noted that lighting in the station area is very poor quality. It is also very visually intrusive which is inappropriate to the AONB. Lighting should be chosen to complement the street furniture and should not have any light spill. Feature LED lighting could be incorporated into the station interchange area.
- 8.20 Planting** – Some participants recommended seasonal display planting. This is high maintenance and costly. It would be better to invest in a few very good quality trees. The theme of simple and bold should apply to planting as much as to other design choices for the site.

Design Principles for the Key Sites

- 8.21 Oakes Bros** – The use of this site is currently restricted by the protected Employment Policy. However the owners have been unable to bring forward a viable employment scheme, and this is now a material consideration in the redevelopment of this site. There was good support through the consultation exercise to see residential or mixed-use development, including residential and employment, on this site. The frontage of any new building should face the station forecourt to provide natural surveillance and make the area feel safer, it should not exceed the building line of the previous building on the site. Some of the forecourt area should be utilised for the station interchange, or if this is not possible have strong hardscape and planting that would contribute to the interchange space using same materials and street trees and street furniture. This should be achieved even with a temporary use as these have the habit of permanence. Three-storey possible. Ground floor parking possible but with active street level frontage. Should have fine grain- narrow bays and frequent openings. Could have contemporary roof form –but consider impact on heritage asset adjacent-Railway tavern. If of more significant scale –leave gap to boundary with pub, or scale down on pub boundary. Rationalise with single access point – share with access to sub station. There is a need to respect properties on Park Street with regard to views and amenity.
- 8.22 St John Ambulance-** If possible revisit approved scheme and work with Oakes Bros to create something comprehensive. Building could cross boundary ownership. Look for more complementary design that says more about Hungerford. No cedar/ timber cladding - avoid projecting fins and alien roof form. Replace render with facing brick. Avoid flat roof. Have more animated ground floor. Glazing units should be better quality and more traditionally spaced or more dramatic use of glazing. Frontage to face station as approved. Forecourt planting and space to contribute to transport interchange as for Oakes Bros site.
- 8.23 West Rowlands Site** –Consent was granted for a speculative three-storey office block. This consent is about to expire and the owners are considering their position. It seems an ideal opportunity to improve upon the consented scheme and contribute more to the station area and make a better offer for potential occupiers. The building needs to be turned by 90 degrees to face strongly into the transport interchange. It needs a stronger more Hungerford design to act as a visual stop. This would give it a stronger visual presence for a potential occupier and potentially attract better yield. The design of the building should complement the Oakes Bros and St John’s site if possible and use the same materials. The roof should be slate or slate equivalent rather than profile sheeting- this would give it more appeal as an office rather than an industrial building. The building should have more openings at the ground floor – this may allow more flexible letting arrangements. The approved central feature is now dated and is not typical of

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Hungerford. There is an opportunity to create a more contemporary solution, which would appeal better to the target market of high-tech businesses. This is a large and prominent building, there is an opportunity to create a 'wow' factor and raise the standard in the area. If possible the apex of the triangular site should become part of the station interchange and used positively for circulation/ planting. This site may even merit a local architectural design competition to raise the potential for a better quality building on the site. The Town Council could run this competition; generally only nominal expenses are paid to entrants.

8.24 Land adjacent to northern platform- There is Potential to improve this area with planting and possibly provide some additional long stay car parking, although this is likely to increase vehicle movements across the level crossing. The Town Council have aspirations for a possible small station building to replace the existing building on the site or alternatively the existing one could be converted, although there is no funding identified for this at present. Any building on this site to comply with the palette and scale of building materials identified in this brief.

C: Highway Access Improvements

8.25 Highway access to the site is constrained. All options identify an improvement to the Station Road / Park Street junction where visibility is sub standard. This could be resolved by either:

- a pavement build-out at the junction;
- convert one metre from the front garden of house on the junction to a footway.

8.26 Other options should also be welcomed such as an alternative accesses to the Park Street, but these would involve significant land take.

Recommended Actions for the Town Council

ACTIONS

- 8.27 The following section explores the various possible actions available to the Town Council to achieve the outcomes of the development brief. Appendix C contains ideas considered from the workshops but not recommended.
1. Submit final development brief to WBC and seek adoption.
 2. Campaign for an improved interchange layout. To include better waiting shelters on the platforms and the interchange layout as identified in the preferred option. This might be possible through route enhancement management as part of the new franchise by the Rail Operator, at the very least make all parties aware of the aspiration in the town.
 3. Campaign for a new rail station building as part of above.
 4. Campaign for improvements to the junction of Station Road and Park Street.
 5. Clutter audit – review what is necessary in terms of signs, and street furniture. Can signs be combined? Are items redundant/ beyond repair? Look to brand North Wessex Downs on Station Signs.
 6. Draw up more detailed layouts, plans and elevations of the interchange and adjacent sites in accordance with the development brief once adopted. This is likely to be achieved by the developers in the area or by an architectural design competition (using the RIBA format). Ensure expenses of entrants are met to secure quality submissions – will need landowner’s consent.
 7. Car Parking Temporary Use – Oakes Bros site. An opportunity to gain some physical improvements at the Station interchange through the grant of planning consent may be possible, consider it as phase one of the interchange plan.
 8. Consider the role of this brief in shaping the future of Hungerford as part of the Local Plan. Engage with WBC on the next phase of plan making and ask them to consider the residential opportunity of the Oakes site and consider the implications for alternative employment sites.
 9. Land Assembly- HTC to continue to act as facilitators over the complex landownership and access arrangements on the station forecourt also obtain information on services/ underground and above ground to assist developers to identify constraints.
 10. Lobby for funds through the following programmes:
 - From April 2014 West Berkshire Council will collect the community infrastructure levy (CIL) which local communities can use by identifying local priorities. The Town Council can request that CIL requirements from development within the town are put towards

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Station redevelopment as local priority and possibly forgo contributions to other items for example recreational/ community facilities?

- WBC has a small Capital Programme for improvement works these could be for –Cycle parking/ signage/ traffic calming – A bid would need to be made by a ward member for WBC. This brief could act as the evidence for such a bid.
- WBC have government money through The Local Transport 3 (LTP3) programme this can be made available for local schemes that have a significant transport benefit.
- Franchise Funding –HTC make a bid to new Franchise Operator as part of the Route Enhancement Management Programme for station building and interchange improvements.

Appendices

Appendix A

West Berkshire Core Strategy - Policy CS 9

Location and Type of Business Development

The Council seeks to facilitate and promote the growth and forecasted change of business development in the plan period in order to:

manage the growth of B1 floorspace to meet future requirements; manage the reduction of land for B2 uses, whilst maintaining a sufficient portfolio of sites suitable for such uses; and retain a portfolio of sites for B8 uses in suitable locations.

This will be achieved through the following:

(a) The appropriate location of business development:

Proposals for industry, distribution and storage uses will be directed to the District's defined Protected Employment Areas, and existing suitably located employment sites and premises. Any proposals for such uses outside these areas/locations will be assessed by the Council against the following:

compatibility with uses in the area surrounding the proposals and potential impacts on those uses; and capacity and impact on the road network and access by sustainable modes of transport.

New office development will be directed towards West Berkshire's town and district centres as outlined in policy CS11. The scale of development will be appropriate to the size and character of the centre.

If no suitable sites are available within an existing centre, then the following sequential approach will be taken for accommodating additional offices in the review of Protected Employment Areas and any allocations in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. This sequential approach should also be used in support of any planning application for office development outside defined centres:

Edge of centre: suitably located brownfield site or Protected Employment Area within an edge of centre location, and Newbury Business Park. Out of centre: brownfield site or Protected Employment Area within an out of centre location, with good accessibility by alternative modes of transport.

Other existing employment sites and premises not in an edge of centre or out of centre location.

Proposals for non town centre uses which seek the loss of office floorspace within defined town and district centres will need to demonstrate that the proposal maintains the vitality of the existing centre and would no ■

Appendix B

Network Rail Policy on Level Crossings

The most effective way of reducing level crossing risk is to eliminate the crossing completely. Whilst purely private level crossings can be closed by agreement with authorised users, closure of public level crossings is notoriously more difficult under the present law. In addition, closure of a public bridleway or footpath level crossing may result in a requirement to provide an alternative route either in the form of a bridge over the railway, an underpass beneath the railway or through provision of a diversionary route to a nearby existing bridge, underpass or level crossing.

Provision of structures such as bridges or underpasses involves large capital investment. It can also take a long period of time before they are realised due to the need to obtain the necessary planning (and other) consents and the magnitude of the infrastructure works required. Additional land may also need to be purchased. Network Rail is subject to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974 to reduce risk 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. In simple terms this means that the cost, time and effort required in providing a specific risk reduction measure needs to be commensurate with the safety benefit that will be obtained as a result of its implementation. Network Rail's health and safety management system (part of its safety authorisation issued by the Office of Rail Regulation) sets out the company's approach towards prioritisation of safety expenditure.

In the majority of cases the risk associated with individual level crossing use is insufficient to make a clear case for its closure and/or diversion. It is therefore necessary to understand any other benefits that can be factored in, for example reduced operational or maintenance costs, avoidance of forthcoming renewal costs, improved operating performance or funding obtained from other parties involved such as the Highways Agency, local councils or private housing developers. Management judgement also forms a key part of the decision process when qualitatively the risk warrants something to be done but the case for closure and/or diversion is not necessarily clear cut. If it is not practicable to close and/or divert the crossing then it may still be possible to reduce risk through the provision of improved safety features where it is considered reasonably practicable.

Appendix C

Ideas Considered but not recommended

New Station Building as an essential item at the transport interchange – This was raised as a possible solution by a number of respondents and included above in possible actions. Although this is a positive idea for the area, there is very little prospect of a new station building being provided. Given FGWR are in the last year of their franchise and no decision has been made on the next franchise investment by the operator has been ruled out at present. It has not been possible to contact Network Rail with regard to this. If a lift building was required to replace the level crossing it is possible some kind of station office could be incorporated into a lift building. Care would be required for such a structure.

Vehicular link to the Common through the Station – This would create additional traffic within the station area and was seen to have a negative impact

New vehicle access from Portdown – The level differences between the station site and Portdown make this impractical. In addition it would affect ownership and access rights for the Rowland's site.

Coach parking spaces on St Ambulance Station – It has been suggested that the site could be purchased for use as coach parking spaces. This is not recommended, if the site is left as open parking and undeveloped it fails to enclose the station forecourt building and contribute to the townscape quality of the site. The desire for 2-3 coach parking spaces is impractical due to space requirements. Option Five shown below shows the impact on the station area of a full bus/ coach turning circle on the interchange, however. It does not leave sufficient space for coach waiting without the loss of a significant number of long stay parking spaces.

Tesco swap to other sites – Although this at first glance has potential as retail can be considered employment use and the redundant site could be used for employment/ other uses, the main problem with this will be traffic generation. None of the sites surrounding the station have adequate access facilities for a larger food store. In addition Hungerford is perceived as having traditional strong High Street retail that would be undermined by a bigger supermarket. WBC have confirmed there is no retail need for additional foodstore floorspace in the town according to the Core Strategy.

Retail use on Oakes Bros site – A number of respondents thought a café use on the ground floor of the Oakes Bros site might be a useful addition to enliven the area. There was resistance from the Chamber of Trade who wish to protect the High Street. Even if were not in competition with the High Street there is likely to be insufficient footfall for a café to trade on this site. A small kiosk might be viable if a lift building/ station office was proposed.

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