ICO DIDSBURY POINT: ADDITIONAL CAR PARKING

Planning, Design & Access Statement

May 2013

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 This Statement accompanies a full planning application at Didsbury Point for car parking and landscaping. The application is made on the iCO business community part of the site.

1.2 Initially the iCO business community was planned as a development of five office buildings. These intentions have changed with the disposal to Circle and subsequent planning permission for a hospital on the site of three of these office buildings. This has led to the current strategy of iCO1 as a single large office building with the former iCO2 site being used as car parking to support iCO1.

1.3 The mix of office and hospital uses on the site will still generate a significant number of jobs in high quality accommodation, in line with the original vision for Didsbury Point. Additionally, The Point mixed use building, comprising retail and residential uses, is currently on-site on the opposite side of The Boulevard.

1.4 This application is made to support the letting viability of the adjacent iCO1 office building. This building was completed in 2007 but still remains only partially let. The provision of additional car parking will improve the market desirability of office accommodation here and will enable the building to fully serve its original purpose, providing significant economic advantages and bringing a large number of new jobs to Didsbury Point.

1.5 The application is made in response to a specific interest by a large company that has a firm interest in fully occupying the remaining office accommodation, provided the level of car parking applied for is met. The sustainability advantages of the site are recognised and public transport will also continue to play a large role in the access strategy for the office building. The application also serves a wider need to support the long-term letting of iCO1, whoever the tenant may be.

1.6 The site of the application is a currently cleared site that has an extant planning permission for another smaller office building (known as iCO2). Planning permission was granted here in 2007 for a 4,465 sqm four-stroey building with 129 parking spaces (including an underground deck). In response to current market interest, and the length of time that iCO1 has remained only partially let, the current car parking application would replace the previously envisaged iCO2 unit. Additionally, part of the iCO2 site was sold to Circle as part of their proposals for a new hospital on the adjacent site (which now has full planning permissions). This has left just 0.83 hectares of the remaining iCO2 site, leaving it too small to deliver the consented office scheme.

1.7 On determination of this application, the car parking would be delivered directly . A key part of the proposals is a high quality landscaping scheme that ensures that the quality and feel of Didsbury Point is maintained, allowing the site to integrate with its context and to respect its prominence at the gateway of the iCO business community.

2 SITE CONTEXT

2.1 The site context has been assessed previously in developing the original masterplan for Didsbury Point, the outline planning application and the previous planning application for office development on this site.

2.2 **Movement and Access**- The site is well located for public transport. A cycleway runs close to the site on Princess Parkway. Vehicle access will be via a new access from The Boulevard. The new Metrolink service opens in summer 2013 with a stop within 5 minutes walking distance of the site on Princess Road.

2.3 **Uses and activities**- The Didsbury Point site is a mixed use area. Significant residential development is now complete and occupied. Office and healthcare uses partially occupy the completed iCO1 building. A mixed use residential/retail building is currently on-site adjacent to the Garden Square and full planning permission was secured last year for a new private hospital by Circle, on the remainder of the iCO employment site. There is also completed and proposed residential development by other developers in the immediate vicinity. The wider context is that the site lies between the West Didsbury residential neighbourhood and the Princess Road corridor. The former is an established and thriving residential area, the latter is a key radial route which is becoming the focus of office and commercial development in this locality. The local centre of West Didsbury lies approximately a 10 minute walk from the site and is focused on Burton Road and Lapwing Lane.

2.4 **Buildings and townscape**- The predominant townscape character for the site is the previously developed elements of Didsbury Point. This is a high quality contemporary residential design that has been recognised locally and nationally (i.e. by CABE Building for Life Silver Standard) as best practice. Beyond this the established residential neighbourhood consists primarily of late Victorian townhouses and terraces. On Cavendish Road these buildings have no special quality but further east is the Albert Park Conservation Area which includes many good examples of this style.

2.5 Another important townscape context is the Princess Road corridor where buildings tend to be large commercial units of modern design, set pavilion-style within their own landscape and car parking (for example Sir William Siemens House).

2.6 **Residential Interface** – a residential street, Clearwater Drive (part of Didsbury Point), lies to the south of the site, with a four-storey apartment building and family houses directly neighbouring the site. The proposals for the site have been mindful of respecting the residential amenity of these neighbours. The landscape scheme continues the approach previously established, and a significant landscape buffer is already established on-site at this boundary. It is worth noting that there is an extant planning permission for a four-storey office building, with car parking, on the site and the current proposals will have considerably less impact on residential amenity than this approved scheme.

2.7 **Public realm and open space**- The intention for the commercial zone at Didsbury Point is for a parkland setting in which buildings are set within high quality landscaping. This landscaping has already been approved and will soon be planted. Existing public realm includes the 'Garden Square' and 'The Point' public art sculpture within the roundabout on the Boulevard. The established Paupers Wood also lies to the south of the site.

The application site is at the gateway of the iCO business community, which is defined by the iCO1 building, as such a high quality landscape scheme is required to reflect the prominence of the location.

2.8 **Sustainability** - The site offers excellent benefits in terms of sustainability. The site itself is brownfield and located in an urban area. The proposed use is part of a mix of uses on Didsbury Point, including residential, employment and retail/leisure. Density and proximities on site promote walking. Also the site is well served by excellent public transport links. There are many regular bus services on Princess Road, some of which have even been diverted through Didsbury Point. There are bus stops within a 5 minute walk of the site. Also the proposed Metrolink extension will also include a stop within a 5 minute walk of the site. The approved and existing landscaping, and the established Paupers Wood, all encourage local biodiversity.

Opportunities and Constraints

2.9 In summary the site context is well understood and this understanding has informed the development of Didsbury Point to date. The high quality landscape proposals for the site will ensure that it contributes to this wider vision, and the provision of car parking is consistent with the Princess Road context.

3 PLANNING CONTEXT

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

3.1 The **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF), released on the 27 March 2012 by the DCLG, sets out the Government's planning guidance in a single, coherent document. It is a material consideration on all planning decisions.

3.2 The NPPF states that "*At the heart of the planning system is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision-taking*". Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and approve development that accords with the development plan without delay. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It has economic, social and environmental dimensions [NPPF, p2-4].

3.3 The NPPF goes on to state that Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth and that planning policies should seek to address potential barriers to investment.

3.4 Plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel is minimised and the use of sustainable modes can be maximised. A key tool to facilitate this will be the Travel Plan.

Local Planning Policy

3.5 Manchester City Council adopted their **Core Strategy** in July 2012. This is now the key statutory planning document, although elements of the previous UDP remain extant.

3.6 Spatial Objective 2 (SO2. Economy) of the Core Strategy seeks to "*support a significant improvement of the City's economic performance and spread the benefits of this growth across the City to reduce economic, environmental and social disparities, and to help create inclusive sustainable communities*".

3.7 Development proposals should have regard to "*ensuring design makes the best possible use of a site or building in terms of efficient use of space, enhancing the sense of place of the wider area and minimising detrimental impacts on adjacent uses, considers the needs of users/employees of a site/building for access via walking, cycling and public transport and reduction of opportunities for crime by applying current best practice in security design*" [Policy EC1].

Parking Numbers

3.8 Manchester City Council now imposes maximum car parking standards (in Appendix B of the Core Strategy) for different land uses, and for locations both within and outside the City Centre or District Centres. For B1 office use for stand-alone offices (which iCO1 now is as the remainder of the site has been approved for hospital development by Circle) outside of centres the maximum ratio is **1 space per 30 sqm**. There is also a requirement for 5% disabled spaces, or 2 bays (whichever is greater).

3.9 At present, iCO1 provides 6,087 sqm (GEA). With 167 spaces provided this equates to a ratio of **36.4 sqm**, which is in line with the current policy standards. It should be noted that the original scheme also included a further 26 spaces located along the site roads. Only four of these spaces were delivered – disabled spaces on the edge of the current application site, and these will be removed as part of the current application.

3.10 The addition of 97 spaces would change the ratio to **1:23.1 sqm** (6087 sqm / 167 + 97). This is an overprovision above the policy standard of 1:30 qm. Applying this ratio would mean a provision of 203 spaces. There will therefore be an over-provision of **61 spaces.** Whilst this is contrary to the parking standard we believe that there are strong economic development reasons to allow an exception (see Section 4).

3.11 The Optegra spaces are included within these calculations because the car parking would be assigned to the iCO1 building, to be managed depending on the requirements of tenants, and the tenants may change over time. The current intention is of course for all of the 97 spaces to be allocated to Costain.

3.12 The above standard also requires 5 of the 97 spaces to be disabled spaces. The four existing disabled spaces at the entrance to the site also need to be replaced. As these spaces are all required to serve iCO1 and require easy access to the building then they will be provided by re-allocating existing spaces on the iCO1 site.

Planning History

3.13 There is a significant planning application history at Didsbury Point, with the original vision for the site becoming developed in detail as the scheme has progressed. The key applications affecting the application site are listed below, all of which were granted planning permission:

- 06032/00/SOUTH2/00 – outline application for mixed use development at Didsbury Point - December 2000.
- 073290/ JO/2004/S1 – renewal of the above outline permission for a further 3 years – February 2006.
- 065422/MO/SOUTH2/02 - Phase 1 Infrastructure
- 067287/FO/SOUTH2/03 – reserved matters application for iCO1 office building – June 2003.
- 092710/FO/2010/S1 – change of use of ground floor of iCO1 for Optegra opthalmic treatment clinic – May 2010
- 080351/FO/2006/S1 – reserved matters application for a part 4 part 5 storey office building (iCO2) on the current application site – July 2007. Pre-commencement conditions and a technical start-on-site was made in 2010, with MCC confirming lawful commencement, and leaving this as an extant permission.
- 092906/00/2010/S1 – outline application for a private hospital by Circle on the remainder of the iCO office site – July 2010.
- 097203/FO/2011/S1 – full planning permission for the Circle hospital – August 2011. This has not yet been implemented but Circle still intends to develop this hospital.

4 THE ECONOMIC CASE

iCO1 Office Building: Letting and Requirements

4.1 The iCO1 unit was completed in 2007 and in the intervening 8 years it has never been fully let. Currently the laser eye surgery Optegra occupy the ground floor and ETDE Contracting currently occupy the third floor, but the first and second floors remain vacant (approx 27,000 sq ft). Marketing of the site has been difficult, largely due to the availability of sufficient car parking spaces to match tenants requirements. It goes without saying that it is a priority for Countryside Properties and Liberty Property Trust to ensure that the building is fully let as soon as possible, and that this will also provide significant economic advantages locally.

4.2 The applicant has had a number of discussions with occupiers at Didsbury Point who have been interested in the building only if they could secure additional car parking. Up to 128 parking spaces can be made available on the iCO1 site. The requirements of interested parties to date are summarised in Table 4.1.

4.3 In order to fully let the site the applicant is therefore seeking to increase the car parking available at the site, by using the iCO2 site which is directly adjacent, on the opposite side of The Avenue.

4.4 The interest for the Costain Group plc (see below) is the immediate driver for the application but it is recognised that there is a wider need to secure additional car parking in order to make the site attractive to the market. This application is not therefore dependent on the interest from Costain.

Table 4.1 : Requirements of Potential Tenants

Occupier	Required sq footage	Total car parking required	Additional space above those demised
Balfour Beatty	41,000	300	75
Shell	27,000	150	70
Lookers plc	13,500	110	70
Covergys	30,000	200	220
John Lewis	20,000	140	80

Interest from Costain Group Plc

4.5 The applicant has recently had strong interest in letting from the Costain Group plc. Costain are a long established business providing significant long term employment in the Northwest. The accommodation would be a base for their Natural Resources division which employs highly skilled staff working in the gas, oil and nuclear industries for such clients as Centrica, Perenco and the National Grid. In the UK the company has an annual turnover of approx £900 million.

4.6 Costain are looking to relocate their Natural Resources base from Trident at Manchester Airport in order to improve the quality of their accommocation. 400 staff are employed at Trident, who would all move to Didsbury Point. Costain anticipate employing additional staff here too, up to 450 in total.

4.7 In order to meet their requirements Costain would occupy all of the first, second and third floors of iCO1. ETDE Contracting would be relocated and Optegra would remain as the ground floor tenant.

4.8 iCO1 provides Costain with high quality accommodation that meets all of their requirement except for the number of car parking spaces they need.

4.9 Costain's initial requirement was for 450 car parking spaces. It is accepted that this is not achievable on the site and does not reflect the public transport advantages of the location or the sustainability aspirations of the applicant.

4.10 The site can accommodate 97 parking spaces, when considered alongside the high quality landscaping scheme that the applicant wishes to deliver here. In addition to the 128 spaces available on the iCO1 site this provides 225 spaces.

4.11 The applicant believes that providing 97 spaces on the application site will attract a tenant to iCO1 that will enable its full letting. In combination with an effective Travel Plan this level of provision can meet the needs of the Costain Group.

Market Context

4.12 In order to attract tenants, the iCO1 building must compete effectively in the local property market. Costain's alternative option at Concord Business Park, Wythenshawe, providing 194 spaces at a ratio of 1 : 206 sq ft. The table below sets out other local office space that is currently available, and the ratio of parking spaces provided for each. It shows that the additional parking will leave the iCO1 building with a mid-range parking ratio compared to its competitors, whilst at present it lies far behind them in parking provision.

Table 4.2: Local office space and car parking ratios

	Ratio (sq ft)	Ration (sq m) (GIA)
Didsbury Point (existing)	**1:392**	**1: 36.4**
Didsbury Point (proposed)	**1:248**	**1:23.1**
The Towers Business Park	1:286	1:26.6
Cheadle Royal Business Park	1:210	1:19.5
Renaissance Court, Christie Fields	1:219	1:20.3
The Royals Business Park	1:200	1:18.6
Manchester Business Park	1:279	1:25.6
Atlas Business Park	1:200	1:18.6
Concord Business Park	1:206	1:19.1

Economic Benefits

4.13 Countryside Properties and Liberty Property Trust have made a very considerable investment at Didsbury Point, helping to successfully regenerate the site following the closure of Withington Hospital in 1999.

This has included the construction of iCO1 at £8m and investment of over £20, into the overall site to date.

4.14 Costain are currently located at Trident, Manchester Airport and so their arrival will not bring jobs from outside Manchester, however the company is seeking to relocate from Trident and there is a significant risk that these jobs would move outside Manchester. The area of search of their requirements extended well beyond Manchester, including site as far Warrington, Knutsford and Frodsham. They did originally shortlist 4 options in Warrington.

4.15 It is also important to emphasise the Costain intend to grow their staffing at Didsbury Point to 450; representing 50 new highly skilled jobs created locally that are new to Manchester. The current car parking application supports this level of growth.

4.16 Attracting Costain to Didsbury Point will provide significant economic benefits to Manchester, and more locally to West Didsbury, including:

- Continuing the regeneration of the former Withington Hospital site by bringing all of the office element into full active economic use.
- Moving highly skilled staff to West Didsbury – boosting the local property market and helping to support local shops, restaurants and services.
- Providing employment opportunities locally for 50 new jobs.

Description of Jobs to be Located at Didsbury Point

4.17 The Natural Resources division of Costain delivers projects for Nuclear, Hydrocarbon & Chemical (including oil and gas), Water and Waste sectors. Projects phases typically include initial design studies and detail engineering design, a construction & commissioning phase and then may include care & maintenance of the asset. There is inevitably some overlap between the phases and projects and thus numbers of personnel within the Manchester office itself ebbs and flows as projects progress.

4.18 It is anticipated that Costain will refer to the proposed new office as Costain Manchester and will accommodate the majority of non-site based, Natural Resources personnel, (with the remainder located within a few, smaller offices located around the country or on project sites). In addition, there will be a smaller number of personnel from the Infrastructure division, who provide support to Highways and Rail sectors for example. An key consideration in the choice of location is the frequent requirement to accommodate clients throughout project delivery.

4.19 The vast majority of staff within the Natural resources division deliver directly to projects or contribute to business development / work winning opportunities.

4.20 The current breakdown of personnel delivering projects from the current Manchester office is:

- 150 - Engineering / Technical Solutions including: Civil & Structural, Electrical, Front End Design, Instrumentation, Mechanical, Piping, Process
- 90 - Project Services - SHE, QA/QC, Procurement, Document Control (a proportion of these will typically be site based)
- 40 - Project Management / Project Control Activities
- 30 - Proposals, Estimating, Business Dev, Commercial
- 50 - Construction & Commissioning (the majority of which will typically be site based)
- Costain also currently accommodate 50 members of client teams.

5 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

5.1 The application is for 97 car parking spaces, a new vehicle access and a high quality landscape scheme. For more details on the car parking spaces please refer to Section 6.

Landscape Proposals

5.2 A full landscape scheme has been developed as part of this application, including a landscape site plan and planting plan. Please refer to the plans submitted with this application. With the level of detail submitted we do not envisage that a planning condition requiring a landscape scheme is necessary.

5.3 This is a high quality scheme that reflects the aspirations that have been established at Didsbury Point and the location of this development at the gateway to the iCO development. The scheme is also mindful of the neighbouring residents on Clearwater Drive and the scheme has been developed that ensures their amenity and privacy is preserved. The landscape proposals follow the principles established by previous applications, makes extensive use of native species and promotes biodiversity.

5.4 The boundaries to the site to The Avenue and The Boulevard make use of an extensive planting bed. This includes tree and shrub planting. The planting will be heavy enough to control access, which will be provided by a pedestrian route onto The Avenue. The existing substation is retained and screened within this planting, with space around it for access.

5.5 The existing boundary treatment to the properties on Clearwater Drive is maintained. This comprises tree planting that is now becoming mature, and a brick wall (approx 1.8m high). This is a substantial buffer. This interface will be supplemented by additional shrub planting, which has been designed to provide additional low level screening, mitigating against headlamp glare. A cross-section has been provided on the landscape layout to illustrate this boundary.

5.6 The existing close boarded fence will be re-used as a temporary treatment on the southern boundary – to be replaced when the adjacent Circle hospital site is developed.

5.7 More substantial tree planting is provided at the key corners of the site – on to The Boulevard. Here heavy standard (semi-mature) oaks are planted as feature trees.

5.8 The landscape scheme extends to within the car park site itself. Three silver birches are provided as specimen trees within the parking area, aligning with the pedestrian route. These will provide visual amenity and help to break up the parking area, especially when seen by residents from Clearwater Drive.

5.9 Lighting has been carefully considered. The proposed solution uses low-level lighting with a controlled spillage in order to provide sufficient lighting to provide safety in the car park but to avoid unnecessary glare and unsightly columns for the neighbouring residents.

6 ACCESS & PARKING

Access and Circulation

6.1 The car park will be accessed directly from The Avenue – the main spine road through the iCO business community, via a new vehicle access. This access is in a similar position to the approved access for the office building previously proposed for this site, although a change in the site ownership boundary has meant that it has to be shifted slightly. Visibility splays around the access junction conform to current standards.

6.2 The car park circulation makes use of a simple one-way system. The car park is clearly laid out in a legible manner that is easy to manoeuvre. The access routes are 6m wide, conforming to current standards. The car park spaces are 5m by 2.5m.

6.3 A separate and distinct pedestrian route is provided through the car park. This aligns with the internal tree planting to create a safe and attractive route that leads directly to The Avenue and the iCO 1 building.

Parking Numbers and Allocation

6.4 The car park provides 97 spaces, to serve the iCO1 office on the opposite side of the Avenue. These will be allocated to one of the tenants in this building. The current intention is that they will be allocated to the Costain Group plc when they let three floors of this building, becoming its major tenant.

6.5 The iCO1 building currently provides 167 spaces. 128 of these are available and would also be allocated to Costain. The remaining 39 spaces are allocated to Optegra, the ground floor tenant. This would result in Costain have a total of 225 spaces.

Disabled Access and Parking

6.6 Disabled parking will be required to serve the iCO1 building. The Core Strategy requires 5% spaces to be DDA compliant. This means that 11 of Costain's total 225 spaces will be disabled spaces. In order to be close to the building these should be located in the car parking adjacent to iCO1 and not on the application site. 11 disabled spaces will therefore be allocated within the iCO1 car park.

Car Parking Hours and Operation

6.7 Costain, or the tenant of the upper three floors of iCO1, will control the allocation and use of spaces in the car park.

6.8 The iCO1 office building has a planning permission that does not restrict the hours of its use. Additionally, the application site benefits from an extant planning permission for an office use and associated car parking without a time restriction on its use. It therefore would be inappropriate to condition the hours of use of the proposed car park. However, the proposed use by Costain is an office function and would conform to traditional office hours.

6.9 Costain have confirmed that the majority of personnel are required to work 40 hours per week (Mon-Fri) on a flexible basis with core hours from

10am until 4pm (3pm on Friday). Normal working hours are between 7am and 7pm. Weekend work would typically be offered on an overtime basis to achieve a key project milestone, for example. It is highly unlikely that weekend work in itself would require the use of the additional parking space.

6.10 In addition to the proposed car parking, Costain will also be acting to promoting change in the way in which their staff travel to work, encouraging the utilisation of public transport through a robust Travel Plan.

7 SUMMARY

7.1 The proposed development is the latest phase of a longstanding regeneration scheme at Didsbury Point, which has adapted in time to respond to changing market circumstances but which remains true to the original intention of creating a high quality mixed use development with a significant employment component.

7.2 The application site has an extant planning permission for a four storey (5 storey in part including plant) office development with underground and surface car parking. The current proposals represent a scheme that will have a far more favourable effect on residential amenity than this extant permission, and which will also help to address longstanding concerns from local residents about spill-over parking from the office uses.

7.3 The proposed additional car parking is a targeted attempt to seek a tenant for the long vacant office space in iCO1 and bring a large number of jobs to West Didsbury. As such, this is in line with the spirit of the NPPF and should be supported by the application of planning policy. Section 4 provides further detail on the economic benefits that would result from approving this application.

7.4 The additional car parking will increase the provision for iCO1 above the car parking standards set out in Appendix B of the Core Strategy. For the reasons explained above, principally the economic benefits, we believe that an exception is warranted. It is worth noting that even with the additional spaces the number of spaces falls well below Costain's optimum requirements, with the balance to be achieved by a robust Travel Plan that maximises the opportunity of the public transport benefits that Didsbury Point offers, especially with the arrival of Metrolink. The relatively requirement for spaces is a reflection of the high number of staff that will be employed on the site by Costain (450). This should be fully considered when assessing the appropriate level of car parking provision, rather than by the rather crude application of a standard that is based solely on the extent of floorspace.