Report.

T/16/79061
Hocombe Mead
Chandlers Ford.

This application has been referred to committee as Eastleigh Borough Council is the applicant.

The site and its surroundings

1. Hocombe Mead Local Nature Reserve South of Ashdown Road Chandler's Ford Eastleigh SO53 5QD, situated within the parish of Chandlers Ford. The reserve is flanked on all aspects by residential dwellings.

Description of application

2. Coppicing for conservation in accordance with Higher Level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England. Predominantly Hazel with some Ash, Birch, Cherry, Sweet Chestnut and Willow. The area was last coppiced in 2008. Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management which takes advantage of the fact that many trees make new growth from the stump or roots if cut down. In a coppiced wood, tree stems are repeatedly cut down to near ground level. In subsequent growth years, many new shoots will emerge, and, after a number of years the coppiced tree, or stool, is ready to be harvested, and the cycle begins again.

Topography

3. The surrounding landscape has a number of footpaths and boardwalks that have been created with some having steep inclines. Some areas have been sectioned off using natural coppiced Hazel fencing (Dead hedging).

Trees

4. The area to the south of Ashdown Road and west of Ashdown Drive is predominantly historically coppiced Hazel with some mixed species woodland. The area is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO No.58 of 1954 – W2 within the order)

Site characteristics

5. There are over 8 hectares of woodland and meadow in this wildlife reserve which lays to the south of Hocombe Road in Chandlers Ford. Owned and managed by Eastleigh Borough Council it became the councils first Local Nature Reserve in 2008.

Character of locality

6. This area of Chandlers Ford is known for this nature reserve. It has been a managed site with significant importance for nature.

Relevant planning history

7. T/08/62263 - Coppicing of Hazel, Sweet Chestnut, Oak, Silver Birch, Willow as per woodland grant scheme – GRANTED 2009.

8. T/09/65699 – Coppicing of mixed tree species – GRANTED 2009.

9. T/10/67272 - Coppicing and conservation work to various trees – GRANTED 2010.

10. T/11/69642 - Coppicing of various trees – Granted 2011

11. T/15/76884 - Coppicing & woodland management works

Representations received

12. No representations have been received.

Policy context: designation applicable to site

Within Built-Up Area Boundary
Within Established Residential Area
Within Site Of Nature Conservation Interest

Policy commentary

13. The above policies combine to form the criteria on which this application will be assessed with particular regard to impact on the trees and impact on amenity

Comment on representations received

14. N/A

Assessment of proposal: Development plan and / or legislative background

15. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states: "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

Impact of proposed works on trees

16. Trees will be cut down to stump level and allowed to regenerate (re-coppice). Due to Hazels and other species quick regenerative ability within a short time will reshoot and blend with their surroundings, eventually enhancing the sylvan nature of the area.

Impact of proposed works on amenity

17. Coppicing the mixed broadleaves will have an instant effect on the areas visual amenity with the short term loss of the previous coppice regrowth; however this is a recognised method of management and will help to enhance biodiversity and future of the woodland. Only a small area is to be coppiced so views will not be radically changed. These areas of coppice produce regrowth rapidly through the growing season. Many species including butterflies are favourably affected by coppicing. Hazel coppice is particularly good for Dormice. The coppiced regrowth provides aerial walkways of interlinking branches, with the added benefit of the establishment of climbing and scrambling plants such as Honeysuckle and Bramble. All of these plants offer food sources for the dormice through their fruits or nuts, as well as providing the structural habitat necessary for these arboreal creatures.

Other material considerations

18. It is considered that there are no other material considerations to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with the Development Plan and / or legislative background.

Conclusion

19. It is the recommendation of the consulting Tree Officer to grant permission on this application.
20. It is the Tree Officers recommendation that rolling consent be granted and recoppicing allowed within the coupe for a period of 10 years.