

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/23/96102

Site Address: 4 Unit, Trafalgar Close, Eastleigh, SO53 4BW

Case Officer: Summer Sharpe

Description: Change of Use of Unit 4 from Gymnasium (Class E(d)) to Storage use (Class B8), modifications to external elevations and siting of 20 storage containers.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☐	No ☐
- Within urban edge - Aviation safeguarding - Existing employment site - HRA Screening: SAC, SPA & Ramsar - Great Crested Newt White Zone - Southern Water Sewers (2m Buffer) - Surface water flooding (Trafalgar Close)		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Planning App no.	Proposal	Decision
Z/15239/000/00	Construction of cul-de-sac for industrial development	Permitted (July 1974)
Z/15791/000/00	Erection of industrial building with offices.	Permitted (February 1975)
Z/15791/002/00	Construction of industrial building with ancillary offices and stores.	Permitted (December 1976)
Z/15791/004/00	Alterations to ground floor and first floor extension to increase office accommodation.	Permitted (May 1979)
Z/15791/008/00	Side extension.	Refused (July 1992)
Z/15791/009/00	Erection of side extension.	Permitted (November 1992)
A/15791/016/00	Display of internally illuminated fascia sign fronting School Lane.	Withdrawn (May 2001)
Z/15791/015/00	Change of use from furniture manufacture to fitness club with alterations to south east elevation and car park layout including reduction in width of School Lane and Trafalgar Close vehicular access points.	Permitted (August 2001)
A/15791/017/00	Display of internally illuminated fascia signs.	Consent to display the advert (August 2001)
Z/15791/018/00	Change of use from existing industrial use to health club.	Permitted (January 2003)
Z/15239/000/00	Change of use of part of industrial unit from storage and distribution (B8) to bicycle showroom and sales (A1).	Withdrawn (October 2011)
U/14/74859	Certificate of Lawfulness: Use as B8.	Certificate Issued (August 2014)

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☐	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	None received.		
Parish Council:	None received.		
Hampshire Highways:	No objection from a highway perspective. Access in and out of the site will be via existing access points from the highway and this is acceptable with appropriate		

	geometry and visibility splays achievable onto both School Lane and Trafalgar Close. In terms of trip rates, it is noted that the proposals simply return the unit to its original B8 use class, utilised prior to the conversion to a gym and even in comparison to gym use, it is not anticipated that trip rates will be markedly different when taking into account linked and pass-by trips, etc. With regard to parking, whilst the quantum of parking is for EBC to assess, in line with the EBC Parking Standards, it is noted that justification to the numbers is given within the application pack. In terms of the layout of the parking, this has been assessed, with adequately sized bays and aisle widths suitable for easy vehicle turning to enable forward gear access and egress. It is however noted that there is no (a) disabled parking provision and (b) no cycle parking provisions (staff and customers). The case officer may wish to raise this as an issue and get a provision included in line with the EBC Parking Standards.
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Policy:

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Development Plan:

Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036

Policies: S1 (Delivering sustainable development), S2 (Approach to new development), S4 (Employment provision), S12 (Strategic footpath, cycleway and bridleway links), DM1 (General development), DM2 (Environmentally sustainable development), DM11 (Nature conservation), DM13 (Transport), DM14 (Parking), and DM15 (Existing employment sites).

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; and Environmentally Sustainable Development.

Site Visit	Yes ☒	No ☐
10 November 2023.		

Assessment:

Site & Surroundings

The application site comprises a large industrial unit located to the south of Trafalgar Close and west of School Lane. The building is two-storeys in nature with white upvc fenestration, accesses/ entrances to the northern and eastern elevations.

The site is bound by chain link style fencing and gates, but is predominantly vegetated to the north (fronting Trafalgar Close) and by palisade fencing including advertisement banners to the east. The boundary treatment encloses hard standing which provides for vehicular parking. It does, however, appear that there is fencing in between the parking provisions creating a subdivision between the northern and eastern parts of the site.

The site and surroundings fall within the area protecting existing employment, therefore there is a general characteristic of industrial and commercial style buildings, associated advertisements, and significant amount of hard standing and fencing/ boundary treatments.

Proposal

Change of Use of Unit 4 from Gymnasium (Class E(d)) to Storage use (Class B8), modifications to external elevations and siting of 20 storage containers.

The proposed modifications to the external elevations comprise; cladding part of the northern elevation (Merlin Grey BS18B2 in colour), alterations to the entrance doors/loading bays and also a canopy over the reception on the eastern elevation.

The proposed storage containers would be situated to the north of the building on the existing car parking area. The storage containers (individually) would have a footprint of 2.4m by approx. 6.1m and would measure approx. 2.6m in height.

Principle

The application site falls within the urban edge, whereby alterations, extensions and conversions to buildings can be acceptable in principle. The site, also falls within an area which seeks to safeguard existing employment sites protected by Policy DM15. This Policy sets out that uses falling within B2, B8 and E(g) will be supported within these areas. The site was previously in use as a Gym (Class E(d)) where permission is sought to change the use to a 'storage use' (Class B8). The basic principle of the change of use would be Policy compliant, albeit unknown how many employment opportunities would be created as a result of the change of use. The proposals, including the external alterations and siting of storage containers would, however, be subject to the following considerations.

Design

Policy DM1 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) stipulates that all new development should respect the character and appearance of urban areas, take full and proper account of the context of the site including the character, appearance and land uses of the locality or neighbouring, and be compatible in terms of mass, scale, layout density, design and siting.

The proposed change of use would include external alterations. The addition of cladding is considered to be acceptable given that there is existing cladding on the eastern elevation of the host building. There would also be alterations to the entrances and a modest canopy over the reception (to the eastern elevation). These alterations are considered fairly modest and would be appropriate with regard to the host building and when viewed within the wider context of the application site.

The application also proposes the siting of 20no. storage containers to the northern elevation of the host building. The storage containers would be excessively large in terms of their dimensions, and also excessive in terms of their amount. Storage containers are generally fairly utilitarian in terms of their design. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site does fall within industrialised surroundings, the addition of storage containers, especially in this location and quantity is considered to be disproportionate, resulting in a harmful visual impact upon the site and surroundings.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is currently vegetation in situ, which to a degree would aid in screening the storage containers, the LPA do not have any control over this vegetation and whether it is removed. If the vegetation were to be removed the visual impact upon the streetscene would be adversely harmful. Furthermore, due to the nature of the vegetation this is likely to become more sparse in the winter months, which would make the containers more visible and prominent, resulting in an adverse visual impact.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states '*development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents*'. Due to the inappropriate siting and dimensions, the proposed storage containers are considered to result in incongruous additions, which would have an adversely harmful impact upon the site, and wider public vantage points.

Overall, and to conclude, the storage containers would result in an unacceptable addition which would appear at odds with the wider vicinity, thus being contrary to the local plan policies, and SPD. In accordance with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF, this development is not considered well designed, thus warranting refusal.

Impact upon Neighbouring Amenities

Policy DM1 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) amongst other matters, stipulates that all new development should not have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenities of both new and existing residents.

Due to the location of the application site, falling within a protected employment area, there are no residential properties nearby which would be affected as a result of the proposals.

Highway Safety & Parking

Policy DM13 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) requires that development is or could be well served by public transport, cycling and walking and it includes measures which minimise its impact on the existing highway network. Policy DM14 of the same Plan requires that an appropriate level of car parking be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted standards. The policy provisions are consistent with the requirements of the NPPF and in particular those of paragraphs 107 and 108.

Due to the nature of the proposals, the Local Highways Authority (LHA) have been consulted, whereby they raised no objection in principle.

They noted that access in and out of the site would be via the existing access points which would be acceptable. They commented on trip rates, noting that it is not anticipated that these would be markedly different. As such, the proposals would be acceptable in these regards.

Turning to parking, the proposed storage containers would be situated on the existing parking provisions. Currently, the site benefits from 48no. parking spaces (shown on the parking plan. It is noted that there are a further 19no. spaces within the blue outline, thus cumulating to 67no. spaces). The proposed siting of storage containers would result in the loss of 20no. parking provisions, retaining only 28no. vehicle spaces within the red line. In terms of layout, even with the storage containers in situ, the LHA are satisfied that there would be adequate space internally. However concern is raised with regard to the amount.

The Planning Statement notes that [the parking spaces] have *proven to be more than sufficient parking to serve the building, and on the basis of the current operation of Sentry Self Storage it is evident that the additional storage space will not give rise to a significant demand of on-site parking*. However, no evidence or trip rates have been submitted to the LPA to demonstrate that the proposed loss of parking would be satisfactory to serve the site. It should also be noted that the proposals would intensify the existing use of the storage site (as a result of the storage containers), as well as resulting in the loss of 20no. parking provisions. Furthermore, within the application form it is noted that there is currently 2no. full time and 1no. part time employees. However, no information has been provided with regard to proposed employees or customers. The LHA did also note that there are no disabled parking bays, nor are there any cycle parking provisions.

As such, it would be concluded that there is insufficient information with regard to the proposed use of the site in terms of number of employees and customer trip rates to determine whether the proposed change of use and reduced parking provisions would be acceptable.

It should, however, be noted that, had the proposals have been acceptable, an updated parking plan could have been requested to show the provisions of disabled parking bays and indicative siting for cycle storage.

Sustainability

Policy DM2 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) requires new development to be environmentally sustainable. Section (b) of this Policy sets out that *all other development that is above 500 square metres of floor space measured externally (including extensions and conversions to existing buildings) must achieve BREEAM 'excellent' (or equivalent)*. This Policy is also supported by the Council's Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD.

This application proposes the conversion of gym to storage use, whereby the floor space would measure approx. 836 square metres, thus requiring compliance with Policy DM2. No information has been submitted with regard to sustainability, nor a BREEAM Pre-Assessment. It is therefore unknown whether the proposals could achieve an 'excellent' BREEAM rating as required by Policy and therefore would warrant reason for refusal.

Other Matters

Plans of the proposed storage containers were requested during the application process. These were provided with measurements, however no scale bar was included. It should be noted that the measurements provided on this plan (Unit 4 Trafalgar Close, C/Ford – Container Plan) differ to those on plan referenced Part of Unit 4 Trafalgar Close, C/Ford – Site Plan (20 CONTAINERS), as the scale bar on this plan does not appear to tally correctly. This is fundamentally a validation issue, however since the application is being recommended for refusal amended plans, including the scale bar, were not requested.

Equalities Act:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2021 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equality implications.

Climate Change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality by

2030; (c) ensure that the Councils procurement policy recognises carbon neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020-2030 and the supporting Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF and development plan do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and Local Plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Local Plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

The NPPF aims for the need for housing to be met, and Policy S2 of the Local Plan sets a target for 14,580 dwellings to be provided by 2036. The NPPF and Policies, S1, DM2, and DM3 of the Local Plan and energy and water elements of the adopted Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD require development to be sustainable in terms of resource use, climate change and energy use. When considering the impact of climate change, the proposed development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change and is expected to limit impacts on climate emissions as a result of the development or its use.

Conclusion:

Reasons for Refusal:

- 1) The proposed storage containers, by reason of their siting, dimensions and utilitarian appearance would result in an unacceptable addition, which would appear as a visually intrusive and incongruous form of development which would be at odds with, and have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the wider surroundings. The proposals are therefore contrary to the requirements of Policy DM1 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) and the provisions of the NPPF (2023).
- 2) Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that there would be sufficient on-site parking provisions, so as not to encourage the parking of vehicles on the public highway and so interrupt the free flow of traffic and cause a hazard to road users. As such, the proposals are contrary to Policy DM1 and DM14 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036), the aims and objections of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and the Council's Residential Parking Standards SPD (2009).
- 3) Insufficient information has been provided with regard to sustainability/ BREEAM pre-assessment to demonstrate that the proposed conversion could achieve 'excellent' BREEAM (or equivalent) rating, contrary to Policy DM2 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036), the aims and objections of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and the Council's Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD (2009).

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☐

REFUSE ☒