

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/23/95855

Site Address: Area of green land on Steele Close, Chandler's Ford – opposite the rear car park to the fire station

Case Officer: Summer Sharpe

Description: Temporary permission for the site compound area (for the replacement of Weardale Road bridge). The compound shall comprise: containers for site offices and welfare, toilet facilities, car parking area, and area for storage of plant/equipment/materials.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Within urban edge - Flood zone 2 & 3 - HRA Screening - Within Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) - Noise & Air Pollution - Proximity to M3 motorway - Southern Water sewers 2m buffer		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Planning App no.	Proposal	Decision
F/22/92271	Location of temporary site compound comprising of 3no. containers, car parking for 7no. cars and storage area for plant, equipment and materials for works being undertaken to bridge on Weardale Road.	Permitted (February 2022)
F/22/93934	The works include the creation of a temporary site compound area during the replacement of Weardale Road bridge. The compound shall comprise: containers for site offices and welfare, toilet facilities, car parking area for approx. 7 vehicles, area for storage of plant/equipment/materials.	Withdrawn (December 2022)

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	<u>2no. Objections, summarised as follows:</u> (a) Steele Close is a congested road already, (b) concerns about parking, including displacement of existing parking for businesses, (c) disruption to natural habitats, (d) noise & air pollution, (e) area where children play/ used by residents, and (f) access in and out of the site is compromised by existing operations.		
Parish Council:	None received.		
EBC Arboriculturalist:	No objection – subject to condition.		
EBC Ecology:	No objection. This appears to be a closely mown sward of amenity grassland with some bare ground on the northern edge. There are records of slow worms along the railway corridor to the south of the M3. If this site has not developed any tussocky grassland, scrub, or other suitable reptile habitat, then I have no ecological objections. The site condition must be confirmed with a current photo and any grass on site must be kept closely mown to prevent suitable reptile habitat from development.		

	Biodiversity enhancement will be required. After the temporary site compound is removed, the site must be restored to an agreed standard. Any lighting must be directed away from trees and boundary vegetation. Tree root protection zones must be protected. If any vegetation needs to be cut back to accommodate the proposal it must be done outside of bird nesting season which is usually between March and August inclusive. If this is not possible then a pre-works check for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. Any active bird nests must be cordoned off with a 5m buffer and protected from disturbance until after the young have fledged and left the nest. The proposed location of the generator in the south-eastern corner of the site should be reconsidered although it will be a hybrid low noise generator, it will produce some heat and exhaust gases so would be more appropriately located away from the tree line if possible.
EBC Environmental Health:	None received.
HCC Highways:	No objection to the proposals from a highway perspective. The location of the temporary site compound is within Steele Close, but does not remove any parking provision, or obstruct access for either the fire service, residents, or users of the adjacent car hire business. Onwards, access onto Oakmount Avenue is achievable via a priority junction that has adequate geometry for both oversized vehicles and vehicles pulling trailers, which would be anticipated to make the journey between the site and works on Weardale Road. Applicants should be made aware however that access from Oakmount Avenue onto Weardale Road can be tight due to the junction geometry and roadside parking, though for a temporary use such as this it would be acceptable given refuse vehicle movements are achieved without known incident. Internally, the proposed layout of the site compound is acceptable with offices/ welfare facilities, car parking areas, and equipment/ material storage areas clearly marked out. It is noted however that the parking aisle width is shown to be below standard at approx. 4.8m on plans, with the minimum requirement being 6m. there does however look to be adequate space if the area in front of the offices is utilised and the storage area is pushed north to the site boundary. The case officer may wish to request that plans are updated to show this accordingly. Finally, whilst gates to the compound are not set back 6m into site as would usually be required, the gates are accepted in this instance due to the temporary nature of the compound along with the low vehicle flow levels associated with the northern end (residential) of Steele Close.

Policy:

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Development Plan:

Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036

Policies: S1 (Delivering sustainable development), DM1 (General development), DM5 (Managing flood risk), DM6 (SUDs), DM8 (Pollution), DM11 (Nature Conservation), DM13 (Transport) and DM14 (Parking).

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; and Trees and Development.

Site Visit	Yes ☒	No ☐
23 November 2023.		

Assessment:

Site & Surroundings

The application site comprises an area of green situated within Steele Close. Steele Close is located to the north of Leigh Road, accessed via the west of Oakmount Road. The junction at Leigh Road is controlled by traffic lights. Oakmount Round runs parallel with Steele Close with a treed boundary. The application site specifically relates to the area of green to the west of the treed boundary and east of Steele Close. To the west is the fire station, to the south is a car rental business and associated structures/ uses, including 1no. residential unit. To the north are residential properties.

Proposal

Temporary permission for the site compound area (for the replacement of Weardale Road bridge). The compound shall comprise: containers for site offices and welfare, toilet facilities, car parking area, and area for storage of plant/equipment/materials.

The application proposes a compound to be in situ for a temporary time period. Following discussions with the applicant works are due to commence early Spring 2024, whereby the compound would be needed for approx. a 6 month period. The compound would include 4no. containers (with a footprint of 3m by 9.6m and an overall height of 2.23m). There would be 2no. containers on top of one another, positioned within the southern part of the compound. There would also be a generator situated within the south-eastern corner of the site, a storage area to the northern part of the site and approx. 6-8 car parking provisions. The compound would also be enclosed by 2m high heras style fencing (20m by 22m).

Principle & Background

The application site falls within the urban edge, whereby development is considered to be acceptable in principle, however, would be subject to the considerations set out within this report. It should also be noted that planning application "F/22/92271" gave temporary permission for the proposals, this however expired 30 November 2022.

Within the Officer's Report of the previous application, it was noted that the *works to the Weardale Road bridge are required for safety reasons, so must be undertaken. Given the bridge crosses a river – The Monks Brook – the works need to be undertaken when water levels are low, which means they must be undertaken during the Summer/ Autumn months.*

It was also noted that a *number of alternative locations were considered (see below) for the siting of the required works compound but were not viable, leaving the open space at Steele Close as the only feasible option.*

- *Weardale Road: The road was considered to be too narrow to provide a compound and would have resulted in blocking access for residents.*
- *Pennine Way Recreation Ground: Chandler's Ford Parish Council did not consider the site suitable due to poor access and the substantial works required to make the ground suitable.*
- *Fire Station Car Park: The proposed compound area would occupy more of the car park than the fire station were willing to give up given the length of time required.*

Given the history of the site, and explanation above, the proposals are considered to be acceptable in principle, and will be assessed against the relevant policies below.

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 compound would have a fairly utilitarian appearance situated within a mixed urban/ commercial area of Steele Close. The proposed compound would have an impact upon the visual amenities of Steele Close as a result of the utilitarian appearance, equipment and nature of use, however it would only be for a temporary time period. It is also recommended that a condition requiring the area to be reinstated and repaired to its former condition be imposed, thus ensuring no permanent visual harm.

Ultimately, and whilst unfortunate, the open space at Steele Close does appear to be the most suitable site available within reasonably close proximity to the works site (Weardale Bridge). Within the planning balance, the visual harm arising from the proposals would not warrant refusal given that this would provide a base/ compound for the required works to be undertaken to the Weardale Bridge. As such, the proposals are recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

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. Policy DM8 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) stipulates that development will not be permitted if it is likely to cause loss of amenity of impact upon public health or other unacceptable environmental impacts; including noise pollution.

The siting of the compound would result in the loss of the open space, temporarily. It is acknowledged that this is likely to have a negative impact the amenity of residents. However, whilst taking up the majority of the space, so as to protect surrounding trees, a small area of useable space will still be available at the northern end. Some concern regarding noise and disturbance has also been raised. Whilst noted, it is not envisaged that the placing of the compound or the facilities within it would have any significant impact upon residents in this regard, particularly given the level of background noise from the adjacent main road and motorway, as well as the operational fire station. Further to this, the applicant has advised that the operating hours would be 0800-1700 Monday to Friday, thus there would be no late night/ weekend work which is considered a positive for residents.

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. They were agreeable to the access arrangements (whilst tight in part) and also noted that *the location of the temporary site compound does not remove any parking provisions, or obstruct access for either the fire service, residents, or users of the adjacent car hire business.*

The LHA also commented on the internal layout of the compound, noting this was acceptable, albeit the aisle width falls shorter than the required length. They did, however, note that there does look to be adequate space if the area in front of the offices is utilised and the storage area is pushed north to the site boundary. The proposals would provide for on site parking which is considered to be sufficient for the proposed need/ use. The LHA are aware that the access would result in the displacement of some vehicles, however would not warrant reason for refusal on highway or amenity grounds. The LHA also noted that the gates are not set back 6m into the site (as usually required), however given the temporary nature of the compound, combined with the low vehicle flow levels associated with the northern end of Steele Close (which is residential) this arrangement is considered acceptable.

Therefore and to conclude, the proposals would be acceptable in this regard for the temporary timeframe.

Ecology & Trees

Policy DM11 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) stipulates that the Borough Council will work with statutory and voluntary agencies and developers to; protect, conserve and enhance areas subject to international, national and local nature conservation designations, and promote the net gain of biodiversity on all sites through the protection, enhancement and connection of existing provisions and new habitats and features compatible with the native biodiversity characteristics of the Borough.

Due to the nature of development, the Council's Arboriculturalist and Ecologist have both been consulted.

The Council's Arboriculturalist has raised no objection to the compound, subject to condition, provided it is located outside the Root Protection Areas of adjacent trees. Whilst these trees are not subject to any preservation order, they are nonetheless an important feature of the close and neighbouring Oakmount Road. As such, and subject to condition the proposals are considered to be acceptable in this regard.

The Council's Ecologist has been consulted whereby they raised no objection. They noted that there are records of slow worms nearby, but given the existing nature of the site it is unlikely these protected species would be found. However, the grass on site must be kept closely mown to prevent suitable reptile habitat from development. They also made comments with regard to RPAs of the trees, which must be protected, and in the event any vegetation needs to be cut back to accommodate the proposal, this must be done outside of bird nesting season (March – August), however if that is not possible pre-work checks for nesting birds should be undertaken. As noted above the RPAs will be protected and secured via condition, however as the trees are not protected no separate consent would be required for pruning works. As such, an information is recommended to cover

this matter. They also noted that biodiversity enhancements would be required, and any lighting must be directed away from the trees/ boundary vegetation. A condition is recommended to be imposed to ensure the land is restored to its original condition. Discussions with the applicant have been had whereby they are not proposing any external lighting. However, a condition could be imposed in the event this changed and lighting was needed.

The Council's Ecologist did, however, raise concern with regard to the location of the proposed generator situated within the south-eastern corner of the site. They noted that this would produce some heat and exhaust and could be better positioned on site. Whilst these comments are noted, the generator would only be on during the day for the temporary timeframe the compound is needed. (The applicant has advised that the operating hours would be 0800-1700 Monday to Friday). Whilst the siting of the generator is not ideal, it is not considered to be harmful given the temporary nature of the proposals.

As such, and to conclude, subject to conditions, the proposals are considered to be acceptable with regard to the above.

Flooding

Policy DM5 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) stipulates that new development will only be permitted within the areas at risk of flooding providing that it *meets the sequential test (where required), a site specific flood risk assessment demonstrates the development will be safe, a scheme incorporates flood protection measures*, amongst other matters. Planning and flood risk is also covered within paragraphs 159 – 169 of the NPPF, which set out that development should avoid being located within high-risk areas, or where they are the necessary flood risk measures be implemented.

The application site falls within flood zones 2 and 3. The application has been supported by a site specific flood risk assessment which notes that the proposals would not impact nor be adversely impacted by flooding. The proposals would accommodate a site compound for a temporary time frame which are considered to be 'less vulnerable' in the vulnerability classification, thus are 'deemed appropriate'. Therefore, having regard to the advice set out in the NPPF, the scale of the development and the temporary timeframe, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any increased risk of flooding at the site or adjacent sites.

Conclusion

As before, noted within the previous application (F/22/92271) the concerns of residents at the loss of the open space are noted and understood. However, the works to the Weardale Road bridge are required for public and highway safety reasons, which necessitate the need for a temporary works compound. It is unfortunate that the only available site deemed suitable is the open space at Steele Close and that the timeframe for these works is over the Summer period when its loss would have the greatest impact upon the amenity of residents.

Whilst acknowledging this impact, it would be for a temporary period and would not result in the permanent loss of this amenity space. Notwithstanding, a condition is recommended to secure the complete removal of the compound and reinstatement/repair of the open space, which would give a clear end date to the permission.

On balance therefore, the application is recommended for approval.

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 Council's 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:

The application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐