

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/25/100429

Site Address: SYSTEMS HOUSE, WOODSIDE ROAD, EASTLEIGH, SO50 4ET

Case Officer: David Huckfield

Description: Demolition of existing building and replacement with 3no. flexible light industrial/warehousing units and 1no. warehousing unit with ancillary meeting hall.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Within the Urban Edge Designated Employment Site Within Flood Zone 1		

Relevant Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
F/13/71917 – Provision of additional 4No. parking area spaces – PERMIT (April 2013) T/10/67512 – Crown lift to 4m, crown reduce to provide 3m clearance from building and crown clean 1No. Oak, crown lift to 4m and crown clean 1No. Oak and crown clean 1No. Oak – CONSENT TO TREE WORKS (August 2020) T/07/60696 - T2: English Oak crownlift 4 metres over verge, T3: Remove two lower laterals and reduce by 2.5 metres, T6: English Oak crownlift 4 metres over verge – CONSENT TO TREE WORK (September 2007) Z/37987/000 – Siting of temporary office type structure on top of existing temporary office type structure – PERMIT (September 2001) 29314/001 – Siting of portable building – PERMIT (August 1987) 29314/000 – Change of use from offices to offices, maintenance area for electrical goods and display area – PERMIT (March 1987) 10361/008 – Change of use to warehousing – PERMIT (July 1984) 24520/001 – Erection of 12 nursery industrial units – PERMIT (July 1980) 24520/002 – Change of use from steel storage to industrial / warehouse accommodation – PERMIT (July 1980)		

Site Visit?	Yes ☒	No ☐
A site visit was undertaken by the Case Officer to consider the proposals in context.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☒
Representations	None received.		
Environmental Health	<u>Contaminated Land:</u> The application site is located on land identified as potentially former/ current contaminative use (industrial estate since around 1980s, electrical substation located within the site boundary). A tank is located immediately to the north-west		

corner of the site. These have the potential to have caused contamination of the ground.

The geology of the site comprises sands, silts and clays from the Wittering Formation. The UK radon map indicates that the site is located within 3-5% maximum radon potential.

It is noted from the Design and Access Statement that the current building is vacant and of 'poor quality'. However, it is unknown whether asbestos containing material is present within the building's fabric. The proposed development includes the demolition of the former building to create No. 2 new buildings for light industrial/ warehousing use and meeting hall.

No information is included in the application showing how land contamination risks have been appropriately considered. Based on the above, although the site is not located within a highly sensitive setting, we consider that a preliminary contaminated land assessment, (Phase 1 desk study) and possibly an intrusive ground investigation (Phase 2 site investigation), would help assess the potential risks and confirm that the proposed construction won't inadvertently expose contaminants or pose a health or environmental hazard.

Therefore, it is recommended that the application be permitted only subject to standard contaminated land conditions requiring the investigation and assessment of land contamination, and a requirement that appropriate mitigation of any discovered risks be carried out to the satisfaction of the LPA. A further condition is recommended in relation to the potential for asbestos to be present within the existing building.

Air Quality:

The site is located approximately 130m away from the Eastleigh Air Quality Management Area (AQMA No.1). The proposed development comprises a total of floorspace of 1081m², compared with the existing building providing approximately 800m² floorspace. This represents an increase of around 300m². The probability to generate significant traffic during construction and operational stages is considered to be low.

Even though the proposed development is not expected to pose a significant risk to local air quality, we stress the importance of adopting best practices and measures to safeguard air quality in the area. The planning process should ensure that the proposed development aligns with air quality objectives, promoting a healthy and sustainable environment. This can be achieved by the submission of a CEMP (condition recommended), with particular attention to mitigation measures during demolition activities. In addition, the promotion of sustainable travel should be encouraged.

Noise:

Given that the site lies within a commercial area, close to the M3, and is situated well away from any residential properties, no major noise impacts are anticipated and we find this acceptable.

	Construction noise can be mitigated via the CEMP (condition recommended).
Boyatt Wood Parish Council	No comments to make.
HCC Highways	The site currently benefits from one existing vehicular access onto Woodside Road east of the site, with a new access proposed to the west of the site. It is currently unclear to the Highway Authority how these accesses are to operate, whether they will act in a one-way system, or both can be used to enter and exit the site. Given that neither access looks to be wide enough to accommodate two-way movements for larger vehicles, a one-way system should be implemented, with the western access serving as the entrance and the eastern access as the exit only. Appropriate signage should be installed to indicate the direction of traffic flow. Using both accesses in operation under this system is necessary to support safe and efficient vehicle movements and to minimise disruption to traffic flow. Due to the additional units and the 512m² increase in commercial floor space, a rise in vehicle trips to and from the site is expected. However, the increased level of traffic would not be anticipated to be at a level that significantly impacts the local highway network, particularly when compared as a percentage increase to existing flows, and as such is acceptable. Parking is a matter to be considered by Eastleigh Borough Council as the Local Parking Authority. However, HCC can confirm that the proposed level of parking that has been provided, 26 spaces, does not raise concerns regarding overspill parking on the local highway. As a result of the scale of development and demolition works, a condition will be required for a Construction Site Management Plan, with a further condition recommended to require a one-way access and egress system for the site be implemented and maintained.
Tree Officer	As all of the significant trees have been pre-emptively removed, we have no basis to raise any concerns regarding existing trees. However, it is disappointing to see the applicant take this approach as it is unlikely that they would have been a significant constraint on the usage of the site. As per the SPD, we would request that trees are included in the landscaping proposals.
HCC Flood and Water Management	No comments made.

Relevant Policy and Legislation:

Legislative Background:

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan:

The Development Plan comprises of the Policies of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036. The following policies are of relevance to the application: S1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), S2 (Approach to New Development), S4 (Employment Provision), DM1 (General Criteria for New Development), DM2 (Environmentally Sustainable Development), DM3 (Adaption to Climate Change), DM8 (Pollution), DM11 (Nature Conservation), DM13 (General Development Criteria – Transport), DM14 (Parking), DM15 (Safeguarding Existing Employment Sites).

Other material considerations:Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

The following SPDs and Background Papers are of relevance to the proposals:

- Environmentally Sustainable Development
- Parking Standards

National Planning Policy and Guidance:

The latest iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF or Framework) was published in December 2024 and, as set out within paragraph 231, the policies contained within it are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides additional guidance in support of the policies within the Framework and is also a material consideration in the determination of the application.

Assessment:Principle of development:

The application site lies within the urban edge and forms part of an established employment site within the Council's adopted Local Plan. Policy S2 sets a target of 103,500sqm of new employment development within the Borough across the Plan period (2016-2036), with Policy S4 setting out the strategy for how this will be sought to be achieved. This strategy includes retaining existing (and allocated) employment sites which have the potential to contribute towards future employment needs, and intensifying their use in accordance with the provisions of Policy DM15.

The application proposes the demolition of the existing building which is understood to have most recently been used for a mixture of storage and distribution, and office space. This building has an internal floorspace of 575sqm. It is proposed to be replaced by a terrace of three light-industrial / warehouse units, with each being 279sqm (837sqm in total) and a single detached warehouse / storage building of 250sqm. The latter would be utilised as a warehouse, with it also incorporating a meeting hall space.

Whilst a meeting hall is not strictly an employment use in itself, this as stated within the submission documents, would be ancillary to the principal storage use of the building which is. The proposals would additionally result in a cumulative increase of the amount of employment floorspace on the site with this rising from the current 575sqm to a total of 1087sqm. This accords with the provisions of Policy DM15 which, as set out above, seeks to intensify the usage of land on existing employment sites as part of the Local Plan's strategy to meet the employment needs of the Borough over the plan period.

Accordingly, the proposals are considered to be acceptable in principle. Any subsequent planning approval is, however, subject to the development being considered to be appropriate in other respects, which includes in terms of its layout, design and visual impacts, as well as with regards to amenity, ecology, trees, parking and highway safety. These matters as well as those others of material relevance to the application are covered in the sections below.

Design, layout and impact on the character of the area:

The proposed buildings are functional in design, with their scale and appearance very much reflecting their intended end use. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that they would represent a notable uplift on the current somewhat visually tired appearance of the site and the building which presently occupies it. Each of the new units would have a roller shutter door to its principal elevation and modest areas of glazing to the front and rear, with the heightened eaves and low pitch to the roof serving to maximise the internal haunch height and thereby usability of the space available. Externally the buildings would be finished with metal profile cladding in a mixture of grey and silver, with anthracite aluminium windows. The structures are, therefore, considered to be appropriate for their industrial setting, with their increased scale and footprint both improving their usability as well as making more efficient use of the land available.

With regards to the external space around the building, owing to the proposed provision of the additional access point and the need for suitable manoeuvring space for vehicles servicing the new units, some frontage vegetation will be lost (modest areas of turf / grass). The Council's Tree Officer has, in their consultation response, also highlighted the relatively recent loss of some mature trees along the site frontage and its eastern boundary. Whilst these trees were not covered by a Preservation Order and thereby consent was not required for their removal, nonetheless this does give a much starker appearance to the site frontage.

The submitted site layout plan does at least, however, indicate the retention of some vegetated areas to the front and their enhancement with additional planting. On balance, this is considered reasonable providing that such planting is suitably robust and appropriate for its location. The details of this can be covered by a planning condition requiring a landscaping scheme and its subsequent management to be submitted for approval by the LPA. The scheme will also be required to include details of hard landscaping, for example, surfacing for the access and car parking areas, final details of the perimeter fencing including its colour, etc.

Finally, a further condition will be imposed to prevent goods, plant or materials being deposited or stored in the open without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority. This is in the interests of controlling the visual impacts of the development and to ensure that adequate levels of car parking and manoeuvring space are maintained.

With these conditions, the application is considered to comply with the requirements of Policy DM1 of the adopted Local Plan in respect of its layout, design and impact on the character of the area.

Residential amenity:

The proposals, due to their siting relative to the nearest residential properties which lie a reasonable distance from the site and with other industrial / commercial development in-between, will not unacceptably impact upon the amenity of their occupiers by way of overbearing impact, or loss of light, outlook or privacy. It is also not considered that the use of the buildings would generate undue levels of disturbance during the occupational phase and, having regard to the aforementioned separation distance as well as the provisions of the current consent for the existing premises, it is not deemed necessary in this case to impose a restriction on hours of operation.

The Council's Environmental Health Team have requested the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to control the potential amenity related impacts of the construction phase (i.e. noise, piling if proposed, dust generation etc.). This can be adequately secured through the imposition of a pre-commencement condition, with further conditions to be imposed to control construction hours, as well as to prohibit any on-site burning. With these conditions in place, it is considered that the application complies with Policy DM1 of the Local Plan in respect of the matter of residential amenity.

Highway matters:

Vehicular access to the existing premises is currently provided via a single entrance point from Woodside Road in the south eastern corner of the site. The proposals seek to retain this as well as to introduce an additional point of access further along the southern boundary to the west. As set out within their consultation response, the Highway Authority have highlighted that it is unclear from the submission as to exactly how these accesses would be intended to operate, with the width of the accesses as shown on plan appearing to be insufficient to accommodate two-way movements for larger vehicles that may service the site given the intended end use. They have, therefore, stipulated that a one-way system should be implemented and, on this basis and subject to this being covered by an appropriate planning condition, no objection has been raised. The recommended condition will, therefore, be imposed accordingly.

In terms of the impact of the proposals on the wider highway network, given the increase in floorspace that would result from the development, it would be expected that there will be a likely increase in vehicle trips to and from the site during the operational phase. As noted by the Highway Authority, however, such an increase would not be anticipated to be of a level that would significantly impact on the highway network and, as such, no objection has been raised on these grounds and no mitigation (for example, through developer contributions for highway improvements) is deemed to be required.

There is the potential, however, for impacts to occur during the construction phase of the development (for example, impeding of the highway etc.) if this is not managed appropriately. Accordingly, the Highway Authority have requested a pre-commencement condition to require the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This would be required to cover such matters as contractor parking provision, access and egress for plant and machinery, arrangements for deliveries to the site, the location of temporary site buildings and compounds, the protection of pedestrian routes during construction, and measures for ensuring dirt/mud is not transferred onto the highway. Given the scale of the development, this condition is considered necessary and will thereby be imposed on the planning permission.

Turning to the matter of parking, the requirements for new development are set out within the Council's Parking Standards SPD, with the level of provision necessitated being based on the nature of the use proposed. In this case, the proposals seek a flexible use which would allow for either light industrial or warehouse/distribution use of three of the units and warehouse use with an ancillary meeting room for the other. For light industrial uses the requirement set out within the SPD is for 1 car parking space per 45sqm of floorspace. For warehouse uses it is 1 space per 80sqm.

A 'worst case scenario' in terms of parking requirements would therefore be the use of the terrace of 3 units for light industrial purposes and the use of the other for warehousing. This would necessitate a total parking requirement of 22 spaces; 19 for the light industrial use (837sqm/45sqm per space) and 3 for the warehouse (250sqm/80sqm per space). 26 spaces are proposed in this instance, thereby exceeding the minimum required. The provision of the parking, which will be required prior to first occupation of the development, can be covered by planning condition.

With the conditions proposed, the application is considered to comply with the requirements of Policies DM13 and DM14 of the Local Plan and the Council's adopted Parking Standards SPD.

Contaminated land, noise and air quality:

Given the nature, location and scale of the development, the Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) is satisfied that the proposals do not pose an unacceptable risk in relation to noise and air quality during the operational phase and that the potential impacts arising in these regards from the demolition and construction phase can be appropriately managed through a pre-commencement requirement for the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

With regards to land contamination, the EHO has advised that the application site is located on land identified as potentially former/ current contaminative use and thereby there is the potential for contamination of the ground. It is also noted that the existing building is vacant and described as being of 'poor quality' within the submission. This building is to be demolished as part of the proposals and it is unknown whether asbestos containing material is present within its fabric.

No information has been provided with the application showing how land contamination risks have been considered. However, given that the site is not located within a highly sensitive setting, this matter is deemed to be able to be adequately covered by conditions requiring the submission of a preliminary land contamination investigation and, if required, a site investigation and remediation scheme which would, thereafter, be required to be verified as being fully completed in accordance with the approved details. The potential for asbestos to be present within the existing building can also be covered by a condition to require a scheme for its safe removal if found to be present.

With the conditions proposed, the application is considered to comply with Policy DM8 of the adopted Local Plan in relation to matters pertaining to noise, air quality and contaminated land pollution.

Ecology:

The proposals would be subject to the *de minimus* exemption in respect of the mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements, with the development impacting less than 25sqm of on-site habitat and not impacting a priority habitat. This is owing to the proposals only affecting the existing building (which is to be demolished) and, primarily, the areas of hardstanding around it, with only some modest areas of maintained turf/grass to be lost. Having regard to the nature of the development and the location of the application site, there are no other ecological concerns including in respect of the impacts of the proposals on European protected sites and, as such, the application complies with the provisions of Policy DM11 of the Local Plan.

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; (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, development plan and adopted local plan policy 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 adopted Local Plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

The NPPF supports economic growth and productivity with the aim of building a strong competitive economy, and Policy S2 of the Local Plan sets a target for 103,500sqm of new employment development to be provided within the borough over the plan period as noted earlier in this report. The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Local Plan and the Council's adopted Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD require development to be sustainable in terms of resource use, climate change and energy use. Taking account of the nature of the proposals and the site context, the development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change and to have limited material impact on climate emissions, when considered relative to the existing/previous building and use of the premises.

Equalities implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 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 equalities implications.

Recommendation:	PERMIT subject to conditions
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