

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/26/100797

Site Address: Land at Foxfields, Dodwell Lane, Bursledon, Southampton, SO31 1AD

Case Officer: Katie Lasham

Description: Retrospective Change of Use of Land from Agricultural to Equestrian and retention of mobile structures for hay barn/feed store and tack room, manure bay. Retention of access track and associated works including hardstanding.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Within designated countryside Within designated settlement gap Within proximity of Grade II Listed Building (Dodwell Cottage) Within red zone for Great Crested Newts		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
H/24/96996: Two storey side extension to include side dormer window, alterations to existing northwestern dormer window, single storey rear extension and elevational alterations (Revised scheme to H/23/96605). Approved. H/23/96605: Two storey side and first floor side extensions to include front dormer windows, single storey rear extension and elevational alterations. Refused. Z/33396/000/00: Construction of two storey side extension and single storey front extension. Approved		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	None		
Hedge End Town Council:	No Comment as this requires a more technical response on the legalities.		
Bursledon and Hound North ward councillor	Concern raised if the land area is to be segregated, and leading to a potential for further development and building on at a later date. No objection and acceptable for proposal to be a delegated decision subject to inclusion of a condition that restricts applicant from doing any further works without consent.		
Hampshire Highways	No objection subject to condition that the equestrian facilities remain in sole use of the residential occupier, as is the current situation. This is because if it were to become a commercial venture, such as providing a facility for a riding school or stable renting, then it could result in an increase in vehicle trip level and additional parking required on site.		
Trees	No objection. Containers and hardstanding are sufficiently far away from the significant trees on site. No significant harm is likely to occur.		
Heritage	No objection. Due to the verdant vegetation and topography on the site, proposed structures are not perceived in the setting of the listed heritage asset and are temporary, so if conditioned to be removed when their current use concludes, no concern is raised. From a land use perspective there is probably little alternative, and it maintains the green gap between the two settlements.		
Ecology	No objection. A 10% biodiversity net gain is not required as the proposal is retrospective. However, a biodiversity net gain should be provided to demonstrate that the proposal will not lead to a net loss and some gain.		

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 25 February 2026		

Policy:**National Planning Policy Framework
Planning Practice Guidance****Development Plan:**

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2, S5 and S6; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM11; DM12, DM14 and Policy DM34.

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:Summary of site and proposal

The application site, prior to unauthorised works, was in use as agricultural land and is located within the designated countryside set just outside of Hedge End and in immediate proximity of Windover Interchange (Junction 8) of the M27. It is also within the designated settlement gap separating Hedge End from Bursledon.

The full site owned by the applicant comprises retained agricultural land to the south of the proposed equestrian use, which is used for horse grazing only, and a dwelling in which the owner resides is to the south of the equestrian use. During the application process and further to a site visit, it was made clear that the applicant owns a large amount of agricultural land immediately adjacent the proposed equestrian use. The location plan was therefore updated to show all areas within the applicant's ownership in a blue outline to include the agricultural land that is to be retained in agricultural use and is to be used for horse grazing only. The equestrian land has a vehicular access via a shared entrance off Dodwell Lane that also serves the dwellinghouse. A Grade II Listed Building, Dodwell Cottage, is located to the east of the application site; it is located immediately opposite the dwelling Foxfield and is set further away from the proposed equestrian area.

The proposal seeks retrospective consent for the change of use from agricultural land to equestrian land with associated stables, two containers which serve as a tack room and a hay barn / food store as well as associated paraphernalia including the fencing. Also seeking retrospective permission is the installation of hardstanding that provides an access track that leads down from the dwellinghouse to the stables and containers.

The site is bound by trees to the boundary curtilage and prior to unauthorised works offered a verdant and open character consistent with that of a countryside setting. A site visit confirmed that all works shown on the plan have been installed in full. The land levels of the site are higher nearer to the dwellinghouse and slope downwards from the dwelling to the equestrian use, with the highest point of the proposed vehicle access track being somewhat visible from Dodwell Lane and this disappearing from prominent view as the land levels within the site slope downwards and become more level with Dodwell Lane.

Principle of development

The application site is located within the countryside where development is restricted subject to it meeting the requirements set out within Policy S5 of the Local Plan. Policy S5 states that new development in the countryside will be granted for outdoor recreation and open space, however it only refers to Policy DM32 (Protection of recreation and open space facilities) and DM33 (Provision of recreation and open space facilities with new development) as being acceptable and excludes reference to Policy DM34 (New and enhanced recreation and open space facilities).

Policy DM34 allows for the provision of new and enhanced public and private recreation, and open space facilities uses such as equine use but as stated above is not listed within Policy S5.

Policy DM34 does permit new private recreation space in the countryside, subject to criteria 1.b.i and 1.b.ii of the policy being met, as well as all other criteria within the policy being acceptable. The criteria of Policy DM34 are listed as follows:

1. The provision, extension or enhancement of public and private recreation and open space facilities or uses including those identified in policy DM32 above will be permitted provided that:

a. they accord with the general development criteria and the biodiversity, and heritage policies of this Local Plan;

b. in the countryside:

i. new buildings will be limited to those ancillary to and essential for the use of the land for outdoor sport and recreation; and

ii. development should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character;

c. they contribute to the management of, and where possible enhance the countryside and urban open spaces. The Council may require a legal agreement to ensure that land is managed to maintain or enhance its agricultural and/or landscape value and/or biodiversity interest; and;

d. they are readily accessible to those they are intended to serve by means of transport other than the private car and accord with the transport and parking policies of this Local Plan.

As Policy DM34 permits new recreation facilities within the countryside, the principle of a private equestrian use in the countryside is acceptable subject to compliance with all criteria set out within Policy DM34 1.a-d of the Local Plan.

Furthermore the site is located within a settlement gap, and Policy S6 of the Local Plan permits development within a settlement gap where it would not undermine the visual separation of the settlements and would not have a harmful urbanising effect, therefore development in the settlement gap is acceptable in principle, subject to meeting set criteria which is discussed in the next section of this report.

For the reasons outlined, the scheme is acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with criteria set out within Policies S6 and DM34 of the Local Plan.

Impact on character and appearance of the area and countryside

Policy DM1 of the Local Plan requires all development to respect and where possible enhance the character and appearance of the area, taking full account of mass, scale, materials, layout, density, design and siting both and in relation to the surrounding character of the area, spaces and countryside views. Policy S6 also requires development within the settlement gap to not undermine the physical extent or visual separation of settlements, and it should not have a detrimental urbanising effect on the character of the countryside or have a separate identity to adjoining settlements. Policy DM12 of the Local Plan permits development within the setting of a designated heritage asset subject to it not detracting or harming the significance or special interest of the asset. Finally, Policy DM34 1.b.i allows for the provision of private recreation use in the countryside if the buildings proposed are limited to those ancillary to and essential for the use of the land, and Policy DM34 1.b.ii makes clear that this should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that will create urbanisation or detract from the rural character.

The site, whilst designated as countryside, is set immediately off Windover Interchange (junction 8) of the M27 and is surrounded by the roundabout and Dodwell Lane which

somewhat lessens the rural character of this immediate area. The north of the proposed equestrian use fronting onto the northern part of Dodwell Lane is screened somewhat by perimeter hedging and trees, offering natural screening to the site and obscuring direct views into the site. To the eastern side of Dodwell Lane, mature hedging offers good screening into the site from this viewpoint.

The retrospective permission for the containers, stables, vehicle access track and associated paraphernalia is assessed in turn.

The two containers are located to the northeast of the site and are shielded from prominent view of the surrounding street scene due to them being set behind established hedging and trees and their land levels set lower than Dodwell Lane. These containers are set in proximity of the Grade II Listed Building and accordingly the heritage officer was consulted, who raised no concerns with the provision of these, as they are visually separated from the heritage asset by mature hedging to both sides of Dodwell Lane and being painted dark green also assists in their camouflage. A site visit confirmed these two containers are used as a hay store and a tack room and therefore serve as necessary storage ancillary to the equestrian use. The scale and location of these two containers is acceptable to limit any visual impact and not detract from the rural character, whilst also providing necessary ancillary buildings essential for the use of the land in accordance with Policy DM34 1.b.i and 1.b.ii of the Local Plan, and Policies DM1 and DM11.

The stables are situated at the bottom of the site tucked into the generous boundary hedge, so are virtually invisible from the public domain and are set well away from the Grade II Listed Building. The scale, height and location of the stables is entirely appropriate for the use and do not create any harmful urbanisation, nor do they detract from the rural character of the area. The stables are also essential for the housing and feeding of horses for this equestrian change of use.

The vehicle access track leading to the stables is essential to serve the equestrian use in order to bring supplies into the site and for the movement and transport of horses off site as and when required, because a site visit confirmed that the lower level part of this site where the stables are located is particularly boggy, and without the vehicle track, this would otherwise make vehicle movements into this area unfeasible. The area of hardstanding nearest Foxfield dwelling is partially visible from the north side of Dodwell Lane due to land levels, but much of the hardstanding is not visible from view as it slopes downwards, ensuring that the verdant and open characteristic of the land is maintained and the vehicle track is not considered so significant as to detract from the rural character of the surroundings.

The associated paraphernalia of the close board fencing, post and rail fencing, and post and wire fencing across the equestrian use have been shown on the proposed block plan. These are acceptable in their amount, height and scale as to not unduly impact or detract from the rural character nor cause urbanisation of the area, as these are typical of an equestrian facility. The site visit made clear that the fences do not extend above 2metres and are primarily 1m in height which could be carried out within Permitted Development and with only low-level post and wire fencing proposed to the boundary of the site, this ensures a light weight and transparent boundary treatment spans the site.

For the reasons outlined, the design, layout and change of use from agricultural land to equestrian land is entirely appropriate and assimilates well within this countryside context, without causing any impact on the setting of the Listed Building or creating undue urbanisation in this countryside context, particularly noting the sites proximity to the M27 and the substantial amount of surrounding road surfacing.

The buildings are all ancillary to the change of use from agricultural land to equestrian land and are considered essential without creating overdevelopment of the site and the scale of built form is appropriate for private use. A condition has been added to ensure that when the equestrian use ceases, it is automatically to fall back to agricultural use and at that time all associated buildings must be removed from site and the land restored to its former use. No

floodlighting or structures are proposed that would detract from the rural character. Furthermore, all aspects of the proposal are considered to preserve the physical extent and visual separation of settlements and are appropriate within this designated settlement gap. For the reasons outlined, the scheme is in accordance with Policies S6, DM1, DM12 and DM34 of the Local Plan.

Impact on residential amenity

Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF and Policy DM1 of the Local Plan requires all development to preserve the amenity of neighbouring residents and where possible enhance it to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.

The proposed change of use to equestrian land with associated hardstanding, buildings and paraphernalia is not considered to have any harmful impact on the amenity of surrounding neighbours, with the nearest dwellings set well away from the proposed equestrian area. Furthermore, the site is not to be significantly intensified as this is to remain in private use by the landowners and a condition has been added to restrict this equestrian land for private use only and for no commercial use at any time. For these reasons, the scheme is in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Local Plan.

Impact on highway safety / parking

Policy DM14 of the Local Plan requires new development to provide enough parking spaces in accordance with the Parking Standards SPD and Policy DM13 requires any new development to ensure that a change in use of a site should demonstrate safe and convenient access to the highway network. Policy DM341.d requires new private recreation use to be readily accessible to those they are intended to serve by means of transport other than the private car, and that they accord with the transport and parking policies of the Local Plan.

Hampshire Highways were consulted on the proposal and raised no objection subject to the addition of a condition requiring the equestrian use to be kept for private use only, because any intensification of the use such as serving as a riding school or for the renting of stables etc, would have further impacts on the highway network and would require additional parking beyond that shown for this proposal. A condition has been added restricting the equestrian use to private use only, and for this reason the scheme is in accordance with Policy DM14 of the Local Plan.

The highways officer also made clear that there are no changes proposed to the existing site access to the highway, which is acceptable in this instance, and given the equestrian facilities are to be utilised by the residents of the existing dwelling located on the site, no significant change in vehicle movements associated with the site would be anticipated. For the reasons set out, the scheme is in accordance with Policies, DM13, DM14 and DM34 1.d of the Local Plan.

Impact on trees

Policy DM11 requires proposals to protect, conserve and enhance habitats including trees that are important to biodiversity and local character. The Trees and Development SPD seek development to not involve the loss of trees that add to the value of the character of the area, for their appearance or for biodiversity, unless they can be replaced with features of equivalent or enhanced value.

The tree officer was consulted on the proposal and raised no objection as all the proposed works including the stables, shipping containers, stables and vehicle accessway are set well away from important trees. For this reason, the scheme is in accordance with Policy DM11 of the Local Plan and the Trees and Development SPD.

Impact on ecology

Policy DM11 of the Local Plan requires the protection, conservation and enhancement of all international, national and local nature conservation and designations and networks of habitats. It also requires a net gain of biodiversity on all development sites. Policy DM34 1.a also requires new private recreation use to the general biodiversity criteria set out within the Local Plan.

The ecology officer was consulted on the proposal and made clear that as the scheme is retrospective, there is no requirement for the mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain to be provided. A net gain must still be provided as per the requirements of Policy DM11 of the Local Plan; therefore, a condition has been added that within six months from the date of decision, a scheme detailing the proposed biodiversity enhancements must be submitted to the Council and installed as per the approved biodiversity enhancement plan. There are no likely significant impacts on the SPA.

Subject to the addition of this condition, the scheme is acceptable and in accordance with the aims of Policies DM11 and DM34 1.a of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

The ward councillor raised concerns with the development being subdivided and potentially allowing for further building at a later date. As the application is changing use from agricultural use to equestrian use, unlike agricultural use which has some Permitted Development Rights for new buildings or change of use to buildings, equestrian use does not. Therefore, any further intensification or further buildings would likely require permission as the Council would need to seek assurance that any further built form does not harmfully impact the countryside context, the settlement gap, the setting of the Listed Building and that it does not create an inappropriate intensification of the site. There is no requirement to restrict any Permitted Development Rights where there are none.

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 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, 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 reduce/limit impacts on climate emissions as a result of the development or its use.

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 equality implications.

Conclusion:

Recommendation:	PERMIT ☒	REFUSE ☐
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Comments ...
