

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/26/101209

Site Address: Bell tent glamping at Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley, Southampton, SO31 5GA

Case Officer: Rebecca Altman

Description: Retrospective change of use from local community use (Use Class F2(c)), to caravan and camping (Sui Generis Use Class), to include retention of ancillary buildings comprising toilet and shower block, kitchen, storage shed, reception and staff accommodation.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Historic park and garden – Royal Victoria Country Park • Grade II listed Royal Victoria Country Park and associated listed buildings • Adjacent to West Wood Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and ancient woodland • Designated existing open space facility (Policies DM32 and DM33) • Settlement gap • Countryside • In airport safeguarding zone		

Planning History?	Yes ☐	No ☒
No planning history directly relating to this site. Various planning applications relating to uses and buildings in the wider Royal Victoria Country Park.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☒
Representations:	None received.		
Hound Parish Council:	No objection.		
Historic England:	Defer to Council's Heritage advisors.		
Ecologist:	No objection. Fire risk to woodland appears to be appropriately managed. Biodiversity enhancements are already taking place and an informative note can be added to advise these works to continue. There is no specific requirement for a drainage plan.		
Tree Officer:	No objection. The use of the site for camping is not considered to be significantly detrimental to existing trees.		
Heritage Consultant:	No objection. The glamping site is low key and a good distance from the listed buildings within the country park, also with good intervening screening. The site is a source of income for the park, which is important to help maintain its heritage assets in good condition.		

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 20/05/2026 – photographs on file.		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The <u>Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036</u> : The most relevant policies are:

S1 (sustainable development), S5 (new development in the countryside), S6 (protection of settlement gaps), S8 (historic environment), DM1 (general criteria for new development), DM6 (surface water management), DM11 (nature conservation), DM12 (heritage assets), DM13 (transport) and DM34 (new and enhanced recreation and open space facilities).

Assessment:

Site description and proposal

The application sites lies within Royal Victoria Country Park, towards the centre of the site, just north of the miniature railway station. The whole of the country park is a registered historic park, Grade II listed (incorporating a number of individually listed buildings), and a designated open space facility under Policy DM32 of the Local Plan. The application seeks permission for the retention of a bell tent glamping site, which has been operating on the site for 9 years. The site accommodates 6 sleeping pods and 10 bell tents along with the following ancillary buildings:

- Staff accommodation
- Reception building
- Storage building
- Shared kitchen / shelter
- Toilet block

All of the ancillary buildings are single-storey in height and all are timber clad with the exception of the toilet block. Access to the site is gained from Victoria Road, via existing vehicle and pedestrian tracks through the country park.

Principle of the development

The site lies within the countryside and within an existing country park. The applicant has explained that the glamping site was set up in 2017 as a project to assist in the funding of the country park. The site is now operated on a 5 year rolling contract with Hampshire County Council.

Policy S5 of the Local Plan relates to new development in the countryside and provides some support for tourism development, although specifically through the re-use of buildings or to support the interpretation of heritage assets. Policy S8 encourages development which would enhance heritage assets, ensure their long term maintenance and allow for public enjoyment and interpretation of the assets. Whilst this proposal does not re-use any buildings, it does provide income to the country park and helps support the heritage assets through increased visitor use and public enjoyment.

The NPPF also provides support for tourism use in the countryside, with Paragraph 88 (c) stating that planning decisions should enable '*sustainable rural tourism and leisure development which respect the character of the countryside...*'.

The principle of retaining the glamping site is therefore considered acceptable, subject to consideration of other relevant policy requirements as set out in this report.

Staff accommodation

The glamping site has a mixture of tent structures and lodges, and whilst the tents are closed over the winter, the lodges are operational all year round. The staff accommodation is therefore required to be occupied all year in order to provide security for the site. The applicant has explained that the occupancy of the staff accommodation is directly related to the business, and it is not permanently occupied by the same person(s); e.g. some staff may stay on site for a season and some for shorter or longer periods.

There is no policy in the Local Plan that would support the provision of a permanent dwelling on this site in the countryside, but on the basis that it is linked directly to the on-

going operation and management of the glamping site, its retention is considered acceptable. The occupation of the building solely in conjunction with the business can be secured by condition.

Visual appearance and impact on heritage assets

Policy DM1 of the Local Plan requires new development to not have an unacceptable impact on the character of the countryside or the significance of heritage assets. DM12 further outlines the requirement to protect heritage assets.

The whole of the country park is listed, and a number of the buildings within the site are listed in their own right. The nearest listed building is the Grade II* listed Chapel, which is located approximately 100m to the south-west of the glamping site. There is very limited intervisibility between the two sites; the glamping site cannot be seen from the Chapel due to existing tree screening and the Chapel can only be seen in glimpsed views when looking south-west from the track adjacent to the glamping site. It is therefore not considered that the development has any adverse impact on the setting of the Chapel. The Council's Heritage Consultant has raised no objection.

The glamping site is not visible from anywhere outside of the country park and from within the country park its visibility is limited due to the presence of boundary trees and the low height of the buildings and structures. The clearest view is from the adjacent field to the north, although this view is partially screened by trees and vegetation and due to the low height and natural appearance of the buildings, the site does not appear visually prominent. The development is therefore not considered to have an unacceptable visual impact on the country park or the wider area.

The ancillary buildings within the site are all modest in size and the majority of them have been clad in timber, which is considered an appropriate material to compliment the rural setting. The only exception is the toilet block, which is a green metal structure, but its modest size and the green colour ensures that it is not visually dominant or harmful to the appearance of the site. The appearance of the site is further enhanced by areas of planting.

In summary, the glamping site is considered to sit comfortably within its setting and does not result in an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the site, surroundings or the setting of nearby heritage assets. The proposal therefore accords with Policies DM1 and DM12 of the Local Plan.

Ecology and trees

As the glamping site is already in place, it does not meet the requirement for providing 10% biodiversity net gain. However, a net gain in biodiversity overall is still required in accordance with Policy DM11 of the Local Plan. The applicant has been in liaison with the Council's Ecologist about planting and wildlife enhancement measures that are already being implemented at the site, e.g. management of existing planting which attracts wildlife. They are also proposing further enhancements, including additional planting on site and the provision of bat and bird boxes. Based on this information and the planting / landscaping seen on site, it is considered that biodiversity enhancements are being achieved in accordance with Policy DM11.

Drainage

The applicant has confirmed that all surface water drains from the buildings and infiltrates into the ground. There is no evidence of any issues with the existing surface water drainage and the Council's Ecologist has raised no specific concerns, although has advised that if further development were to take place on the site in the future, the applicant may wish to consider rain gardens or green roofs to enhance water filtration.

For foul drainage, the applicant has confirmed that the site is connected to the mains drainage system. The site is therefore considered to have suitable drainage in place.

Access and parking

Access to the glamping site is from the same location as the main country park, from Victoria Road. The Council's Adopted Parking Standards do not set specific requirements for parking for camp sites, and for this site the applicant has confirmed that most visitors park inside the glamping site adjacent to their tent/unit, or utilise the main car parks within the country park. The site has been operating for 9 years and there are no known issues relating to either the access or parking arrangements. Access and parking is therefore considered acceptable.

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, 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, 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. The applicant has stated that most of the buildings and structures were built with recycled and reclaimed materials and has explained a number of other measures that are in place at the site to reduce its environmental impact, including the use of energy efficient lighting and cleaning products, and the implementation of new planting and measures to attract wildlife throughout the site. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with climate change policy objectives.

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: The glamping site is low key and has no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the site, the wider surroundings or heritage assets. The proposal accords with relevant policy requirements and is therefore considered acceptable, subject to a condition to ensure the staff accommodation cannot be occupied as a permanent dwelling.

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

Conditions and informatives:

The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans numbered: TQRQM25224161946228 (Location Plan); TQRQM25224164241721 (Site Plan); General Site Layout Details and Photographs (Staff accommodation, Reception Building, Tents, Sleeping Pods, Shower Block and Kitchen).

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

The staff accommodation shall only be occupied by employees in conjunction with and ancillary to the glamping business hereby permitted and shall at no time be sold off, let or occupied as an independent unit of accommodation.

Reason: The site is located in the countryside where the provision of an independent dwelling would not be supported by Policy S5 of the Local Plan.

Note to applicant: The applicant is advised to continue the biodiversity enhancement works as set out in the email dated 21 May 2026.

Note to applicant: This decision is made in accordance with Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), which allows for the granting of planning permission for development that has been commenced and/or been completed.

Note to Applicant: In accordance with paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), Eastleigh Borough Council takes a positive approach to the handling of development proposals so as to achieve, whenever possible, a positive outcome and to ensure all proposals are dealt with in a timely manner.