

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/26/102003
Site Address: SCOUT HUT, BRICKFIELD LANE, CHANDLER'S FORD, EASTLEIGH, SO53 4DP
Case Officer: Gregg Chapman
Description: Erection of a two storey "mixed used" Recreational Building for a Scout Hall with Facilities, a Cafe, Meeting Rooms, and First Floor Gym, provided with Refuse Storage, Visitor Cycle Space and 17x Car Parking Spaces, with associated works and level changes.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Within Urban Edge - Within Wider Existing Employment Site - Aviation Safeguarding - TPO trees - Nutrient Neutrality Catchment		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
T/17/80286 - Reduce limbs over Scout hut to give 2-3m clearance, crown lift to 4m and reduce 1no. limb to 1no. Oak (T1) – Consent, May 2017.		
F/07/60192 - Change of use of existing scout hut from D2 (Assembly and Leisure) to D1 (Children's Day Nursery) and D2 (assembly and leisure) and erection of storage shed – Approved, July 2007.		
T/04/52038 - Crown lift/reduce 1no. Oak to clear building by 2.0m – Consent, October 2004.		
Z/06127/007/00 - ETENTION OF PORTABLE BUILDING ADJACENT TO SCOUT HUT – Temporary Permission, January 2002.		
Z/06127/006/00 - CONTINUED SITING OF PREFABRICATED BUILDING FOR USE AS GAMES ROOM – Approved, March 2003		
Z/15334/002/00 - ERECTION OF 23 NO. 2 BEDROOM FLATS IN TWO BLOCKS AND CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SCOUT HUT WITH CAR PARKING, LANDSCAPING AND VEHICULAR ACCESS FROM BRICKFIELD LANE, FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING SCOUT HUT – Withdrawn, October 2000.		
Z/06127/005/00 - RENEWAL OF TEMPORARY PERMISSION: CONTINUED USE OF PREFABRICATED BUILDING AS GAMES ROOM – Temporary Permission, January 1990		
Z/06127/004/00 - SITING OF PORTABLE BUILDING FOR USE AS GAMES ROOM – Approved, November 1985.		
Z/06127/003/00 – Erection of single storey flat roof assembly room for District Scout Headquarters to front of existing hut – Refused, September 1975		
EAB/3583 - The erection of a Scout Hut on 0.15 of an acre – Approved, February 1962.		
EAB/3583/1 - The erection of a Scouts Hut – Approved, July 1962.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☒
Representations:	1 objection, summarised as follows: • Concern that the proposal includes a gym use, particularly as other gym facilities already operate nearby. • The class-based CrossFit activity, could result in additional noise and disturbance to local residents. • Gym-related activity could occur at unsociable hours throughout the day. • Support the continued use and improvement of the Scout hut for community purposes. The existing Scout use has limited impacts because of the times at which the building is used.		

	1 comment, summarised as follows: • Concern about the proposed hours of operation, particularly evening use. Existing noise from nearby commercial activity already affects neighbouring gardens. • The development could increase traffic at the top of Brickfield Lane. • The no-right-turn restriction is frequently ignored by drivers. • Car transporter unloading associated with nearby commercial premises already affects the area outside the Scout hut. • The Brickfield Lane junction requires improvement if the development proceeds. 23 representations of support from neighbours/supporters, summarised as follows: • Support is expressed for bringing the Scouts, Momentum Fitness Charity and CrossFit Southampton together within a shared, purpose-built and long-term facility, helping to secure the future of the organisations. • The proposal is considered to provide a modern, accessible and welcoming community facility, replacing existing buildings and accommodation described as unsuitable, dilapidated and not fit for purpose. • Particular support is given to the dedicated rehabilitation space for Momentum Fitness Charity, which is considered important in providing a safer, more comfortable and appropriate environment for vulnerable users. • Supporters consider that the scheme would deliver wider recreational, health, wellbeing, social and community benefits for people of different ages and abilities, including through inclusive fitness, rehabilitation, Scouting and community activities. • The sustainability measures, accessibility of the site and complementary mix of uses, including the café, meeting rooms and shared facilities, are also supported as part of a positive investment in the local area.
Parish Council:	No response received
Environmental Health	No objection, subject to conditions
Ecology	No objection
HCC Highways	No objection
Tree Officer	No objection
Southern Water	No objection
Leisure Services	Support • This project will take a partnership approach to delivering strong community outcomes for the local area. CrossFit Southampton, Momentum Fitness and the Scouts already have a strong track record of working closely with local residents and community groups and this new proposal will only grow those opportunities and enhance the outcomes. • This proposal will enable a growth in positive health and wellbeing provision within the borough, with organisations working with specific target groups. The existing provision for CrossFit Southampton is recognised within the Council's Built Leisure Facilities Strategy and identified as needing a larger purpose-built facility to meet demand. The Leisure Services

	team would be supportive of their new facility ambitions to enable the continued delivery of health and wellbeing programmes for the community.
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Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 16/09/26		

Policy:
National Policy The NPPF (2026) – The most relevant policies are; S3 S4 / S5, E2, TC3, TC4, CC2, CC3, L2, DP3, DP4, TR3, TR4, TR6, HC4, HC6, HC7, P2, P3, P4, P5, F4, F7, F8, N2, N3. Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The <u>Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036</u> The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2, S4 and S10; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM3, DM4, DM5, DM6, DM8, DM11, DM13, DM14, DM15, DM34 and DM36. Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places (June 2026); Parking Standards (September 2025); Trees and Development; Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:
Principle of Development - <i>Safeguarding of Wider Employment Area</i> The application site lies within the defined urban edge and forms part of the Chandler's Ford Industrial Estate, which is identified as an existing employment site. The site itself is, however, already lawfully in community use (Use Class F2) as an established Scout facility. The proposal would retain and enhance this community use whilst enabling a wider range of community, leisure, fitness, wellness and complementary activities to take place from the site. Policy DM15 of the EBLP seeks to safeguard existing employment sites predominantly for B2, B8 and E(g) uses. In this case, the application site is not presently in one of the employment uses safeguarded by the policy and the proposal would therefore not result in the loss or displacement of existing employment floorspace. The continued function of the wider industrial estate for employment purposes would also be unaffected. Whilst the employment designation is therefore relevant context, the proposal would not undermine the principal purpose of policy DM15 of the EBLP. - <i>Provision of Community and Leisure Use</i> Policy DM34 of the EBLP supports the provision, extension and enhancement of public and private recreation facilities in the built up area, subject to the relevant criteria of the policy. Its supporting text specifically identifies commercial indoor gymnasias and spa facilities as forms of recreation provision. The proposed fitness, wellness and leisure elements are therefore supported in principle by policy DM34, subject to the detailed considerations addressed elsewhere in this report. Policy DM36 of the EBLP is also relevant insofar as it relates to the community and new leisure elements of the proposal. Parts 1 and 2 of the policy direct such development to relevant centres, or if outside of these, but within the urban edge, to locations that would not cause harm to centres.

The Scout community use is already lawfully established on the site and is to be retained and enhanced, rather than constituting a new community facility requiring a choice of location. The locational requirements of part 2 are therefore not considered to require the existing Scout facility itself to be assessed against alternative sites. The established Scout use provides the existing community function around which the additional uses are proposed.

The proposal should be considered as a single, integrated mixed-use facility, with the gym, wellness, charity and ancillary café uses operating alongside and complementing the retained Scout use.

Notwithstanding that Policy DM34 of the EBLP provides support for new leisure facilities, the new fitness and wellness elements do constitute additional leisure provision and fall within the NPPF (2026) definition of a main town centre use. The locational considerations in part 2 of Policy DM36 and the sequential approach in Policy TC3 of the NPPF (2026) are therefore relevant to the assessment of the application in this respect.

The fitness and wellness uses are not proposed as a freestanding leisure development seeking an out-of-centre location, but as part of the wider enhancement and diversification of an established Scout and community facility. The application site is the existing facility available to the Scout group and the proposed leisure uses would operate alongside and complement that retained community use. The sequential assessment should therefore relate to the particular mixed-use package proposed, rather than to an isolated gym or leisure use. Policy TC3 of the NPPF also requires flexibility in relation to format and scale. In these particular circumstances, there is no realistic suitable, viable and available town centre or edge-of-centre location which would provide an alternative for the particular mixed-use development proposed. This is a significant material consideration.

Significantly, the proposal to bring the Scouts, a gym use and a charity use together, with an ancillary café, would provide a range of complementary uses within a single integrated facility. This accords with the expectation of policy DM36, part 3, which seeks the delivery of a range of uses within facilities for general community use. The supporting text to policy DM36 also encourages multi-functional buildings. This is considered to be a substantial benefit of the scheme.

The scale and nature of the proposed leisure uses are also such that, notwithstanding the positive conclusions above, they would not in any event be expected to result in harm to an existing or proposed centre. There is no evidence that the development would adversely affect existing, committed or planned investment in a centre, or the vitality and viability of any centre. The proposal therefore accords with criterion 2(b) of policy DM36 and does not give rise to the type of significant adverse town centre impacts addressed by policy TC4 of the NPPF (2026). Whilst this is a separate consideration from the sequential approach, it further demonstrates that the proposed leisure element would not undermine the wider objectives of national or local town centre policy.

- *Summary of Principle of Development*

The proposal would retain and enhance an established community facility, broaden rather than diminish its community function and provide additional recreation and leisure facilities which are supported in principle by policy DM34.

The development would also provide the type of flexible, multi-functional community facility expressly sought by part 3 of policy DM36, whilst the new leisure uses would not harm existing centres and there is no realistic suitable, viable and available sequentially preferable location for the particular mixed-use proposal. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the overall aims of policies DM15, DM34 and DM36 of the EBLP and the relevant town centre policies of the NPPF (2026). The principle of development is consequently considered acceptable.

Community and Health Benefits

Strategic policy S10 of the EBLP supports the provision and enhancement of community infrastructure, including improvements to existing halls and multi-purpose community facilities. The proposal would replace an established but ageing Scout facility with a substantially improved and more flexible building capable of accommodating a wider range of community activities. This represents a positive benefit of the development and complements the objectives of policies DM34 and DM36 considered above.

There is also significant support at national level. Policy HC4 of the NPPF (2026) states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of proposals which provide new or improved community facilities and to development which makes a demonstrable contribution towards promoting good health, preventing ill-health, reducing health inequalities or supporting social interaction. The proposal would provide an improved Scout and community facility together with fitness, wellness, charitable and social activities. The submitted information explains that Momentum Fitness Charity provides specialist programmes aimed at people experiencing social isolation and long-term health difficulties, together with activities for older people seeking to remain active and independent. These are significant social and community benefits to which substantial weight is afforded in accordance with policy HC4 of the NPPF (2026).

Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy DM1 of the EBLP requires development to have regard to the character and appearance of the locality, make efficient use of land and take full and proper account of its context. Development should be compatible and well integrated with adjoining development in terms of its mass, scale, materials, layout, design and siting. These principles are also reflected in the Council's Quality Places SPD. At national level, policy DP3 of the NPPF (2026) requires development to respond appropriately to its context and achieve well-designed places, including through its built form and identity, whilst policy L2 of the NPPF supports the effective use and intensification of previously developed urban land.

The existing development comprises a modest, single-storey Scout hut which is of limited architectural merit, in need of replacement, and has a relatively low-key presence within the street scene. The proposal would replace this with a purpose-designed two-storey building accommodating the retained Scout and community functions together with the proposed charity, fitness, wellness and leisure uses and ancillary café. The replacement building would consequently be significantly greater in its footprint, height and overall massing than the existing building and would have a more prominent presence within Brickfield Lane.

The increase in scale needs to be considered in the context of the surrounding Chandler's Ford Industrial Estate rather than the building it would replace. The locality is characterised predominantly by comparatively large commercial and industrial buildings of substantial footprints and massing. Although two storeys in height, the proposed building would sit at a comparable height to the neighbouring industrial premises and its scale would not appear excessive or incongruous when viewed within this wider built context. The increased scale and presence of the development is therefore considered appropriate to the established commercial character of the surrounding area.

Notwithstanding its commercial surroundings, the architectural treatment appropriately reflects the different community and leisure function of the building. The glazed entrance provides a clear and welcoming focal point, whilst the proposed material palette (including cladding) and articulation of the elevations break down the apparent mass of the building and provide a softer and more contemporary appearance than the more utilitarian industrial buildings surrounding the site. This distinction is considered appropriate. The building does not seek to replicate the appearance of an industrial unit, but its overall scale, form and massing respond to that context whilst its architectural detailing provides an identifiable character appropriate to a community building. The resulting design is

considered to achieve an appropriate balance between responding to its surroundings and expressing the particular function of the development, consistent with policy DM1 of the EBLP and the context, built form and identity principles of policy DP3 of the NPPF (2026).

Works to the existing ground levels are also proposed, including the raising and regrading of the bank along the western part of the site. These works would increase the usable area of the site and allow the development to make more effective use of land. Subject to the detailed landscaping considerations, the regrading is considered an appropriate response to the site's existing topography and would allow a more efficient and functional layout without resulting in an unacceptable change to the character of the area. This approach accords with policy DM1(b) of the EBLP, which requires development to make efficient use of sites, and is consistent with the objective of policy L2 of the NPPF to make effective use of urban land.

Whilst the replacement building would represent a substantial increase in scale compared with the existing Scout hut and would have a greater presence within the street scene, this is not considered harmful. Its height, scale and massing sit comfortably within the context of the surrounding commercial and industrial development, whilst its architectural treatment provides an appropriate degree of distinction and reflects its community and leisure function. The development would also make significantly more effective use of the site through the proposed building and associated ground-level works. The proposal is therefore considered to respond appropriately to the character and appearance of the locality and would represent a significant improvement over the existing building, in accordance with policy DM1 of the EBLP, the Quality Places SPD and policies DP3 and L2 of the NPPF.

Trees

Policies DM1 and DM11 of the EBLP seek to protect trees and other landscape features of value to the character and biodiversity of an area and require development to take full and proper account of its site context. Policy DM1 establishes a presumption against the loss of or damage to trees of value unless appropriately mitigated, whilst policy DM11 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance trees and other natural features important to biodiversity and local character. These requirements are supplemented by the Council's Trees and Development SPD. The NPPF (2026) similarly recognises through policy N3 the contribution that trees make to biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the character and quality of the built environment, and seeks their appropriate integration and long-term management as part of new development.

The principal arboricultural features of the site are two English oak trees located to the rear of the existing Scout hut, both of which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment categorises both trees as B1 trees of moderate quality in accordance with BS5837:2012. The Council's Tree Officer considers that, owing to their size and the relative lack of other tree canopy within the surrounding industrial area, the two oaks make a good contribution to public amenity.

The proposed building has a substantially greater footprint and height than the existing Scout hut and consequently has a closer relationship with the protected trees. In particular, part of the proposed development and associated works would fall within the root protection area of the larger oak. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies approximately 44sqm of encroachment into the open ground associated with its root protection area. It advises that this can be accommodated without detriment to the tree provided excavation is carefully controlled and recommends consideration of a pad-and-beam foundation to the rear section of the building, taking advantage of the higher proposed finished floor level to minimise excavation and root disturbance. Works within the root protection areas, including the proposed decking and associated construction activity, would therefore need to be undertaken in accordance with the approved arboricultural method statement and appropriate tree protection measures.

The increased height and proximity of the replacement building also necessitates pruning of the larger oak to maintain an appropriate separation from the building. The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment originally identified an increase in the required clearance of approximately 3.65m compared with the existing building. The applicant's arboriculturalist considered that, because of the natural form of the crown, much of the additional work would affect the tips of smaller branches and would not be detrimental to the health or public amenity value of the tree.

The Council's Tree Officer initially raised concern regarding this aspect of the scheme. In particular, the submitted documents were unclear and inconsistent as to the precise tree numbering, whether the works represented crown lifting or crown reduction and the precise extent of pruning required. On the information originally submitted, the Tree Officer considered that a reduction approaching 4m could be excessive and potentially detrimental to the long-term health and appearance of the tree. Following clarification that they intend to crown lift the tree, not reduce it, and revision of the arboricultural information, these matters have been satisfactorily addressed and the extent and specification of the pruning and works within the root protection areas are considered capable of being undertaken without unacceptable harm to the health, longevity or amenity value of the protected trees. Appropriate conditions would secure compliance with the approved arboricultural details, tree protection measures and construction methodology.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment also confirms that existing service connections can be utilised from the front of the site, away from the protected trees, with sufficient space available towards the front of the site for drainage infrastructure, thereby avoiding additional excavation within the sensitive rear part of the site. General construction impacts can be controlled through protective fencing and ground protection in accordance with BS5837.

The development would result in a materially closer relationship between the replacement building and the protected oak trees than exists at present, including works within the root protection area and a requirement for crown pruning. However, importantly, both TPO trees would be retained, and subject to the approved arboricultural construction and pruning measures their long-term health and important contribution to the amenity of the area would be maintained. On this basis, the development is considered to have taken appropriate account of the site's principal arboricultural features and would not result in unacceptable harm to protected trees, in accordance with policies DM1 and DM11 of the EBLP, the Trees and Development SPD and policy N3 of the NPPF (2026).

Highways and Parking

Policies DM13 and DM14 of the EBLP are relevant to the highway and parking implications of the development. Policy DM13 requires development to provide safe and convenient access to the highway network, not cause or increase danger to road users or have a significant detrimental impact on the operation or safety of the highway network, and make appropriate provision for access by alternative modes of transport. Policy DM14 addresses parking provision and the highway implications arising from parking associated with development. The Council's adopted Parking Standards SPD is also a material consideration.

At national level, policies TR3, TR4 and TR6 of the NPPF (2026) are relevant. Policy TR3 requires significant transport and highway safety impacts to be mitigated to an acceptable degree; policy TR4 requires safe and inclusive access arrangements and suitable parking provision reflecting the location and nature of the development; and policy TR6 requires consideration of the likely transport impacts of development. Development should be refused on transport grounds where it would result in a severe adverse impact on the transport network or an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

- *Traffic generation*

The applicant has undertaken a TRICS assessment of the additional vehicle movements associated with the proposed gym use. This predicts approximately four additional two-way vehicle movements during the AM peak hour and nine during the PM peak hour, with approximately 63 movements over the assessed 11-hour weekday period. The existing Scout use was appropriately excluded from this calculation because that use would remain established at the site.

Given the nature of Brickfield Lane as an established industrial estate road, the modest number of additional movements forecast during the highway peak periods and the absence of objection from the Highway Authority, it is considered that the additional traffic generated by the development would not materially affect the operation or capacity of the surrounding highway network.

- *Access*

Vehicular access would continue to be provided from the existing access onto Brickfield Lane. The access already serves the established Scout use and no new/alterd vehicular access onto the highway is proposed. Parking restrictions are present along sections of the road to ensure access to individual premises is maintained. The continued use of the access is considered to be suitable for the nature and scale of the development. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the use of the access for the proposal.

- *Car parking*

The proposal would significantly improve the existing parking arrangement. The current parking area is informal and unmarked, whereas the redevelopment would provide 17 formally laid-out parking spaces to the front of the building. The submitted Transport Technical Note assesses the 238.5sqm gym against the Council's Parking Standards SPD at a rate of one space per 20sqm, generating a requirement for 12 spaces. The proposed 17 spaces would therefore exceed this calculated requirement by five spaces.

Although the proposed development would result in an increase in the overall level of activity on the site, parking demand also needs to be considered in the context of how the different uses would operate. The Scout, gym, charity and ancillary café uses would function in a complementary manner rather than all reaching their maximum occupancy at the same time.

The Scout Group would principally use the building during weekday evenings, with sessions involving a maximum of approximately 30 children and five adults. The existing pattern of Scout use is characterised predominantly by parents dropping off and collecting children rather than remaining parked at the site. The submitted transport information also notes that the usable Scout hall would not materially increase in size and does not anticipate a material change in the established operation of that use.

CrossFit Southampton would operate scheduled classes throughout the weekday and during weekend and bank holiday mornings rather than operating as a conventional open-access gym. Average attendance is stated to be approximately 8.4 people per class, with the busiest periods occurring during weekday mornings, between 4pm and 5pm on weekdays and between 8am and 9am at weekends. Staffing would normally comprise one coach, at least one additional member of staff and a part-time facilities manager.

Momentum Fitness Charity would operate principally within the CrossFit opening hours, with occasional sessions during quieter daytime periods when the gym is otherwise closed. These sessions would involve a maximum of two staff members.

The café would operate as an ancillary, non-profit social enterprise associated with the wider community and fitness functions of the building rather than as an independent café attracting a significant separate level of traffic or parking demand. This is consistent with the submitted Transport Technical Note, which confirms that the café is intended for users of the Scout and gym facilities rather than as a general public café.

Importantly, the principal uses would therefore generally operate at different times. The latest Transport Technical Note identifies only a limited period of overlap between the gym and Scout activities and provides five additional parking spaces above the calculated gym requirement specifically to accommodate this crossover. The operating information submitted with the application similarly demonstrates that the different activities would be spread across the day and week rather than generating their maximum parking demands simultaneously.

The proposal would consequently provide an improved and formalised parking arrangement with sufficient capacity to accommodate the anticipated normal operation of the development. Appropriate conditions controlling the nature and hours of the respective uses and, where necessary, the maximum size of gym classes would ensure that the parking assessment remains representative of the development as operated.

- *Cycle parking and servicing*

The development would also provide cycle parking comprising six short-stay spaces within three Sheffield stands and four long-stay spaces available internally. The applicant acknowledges that this is below the numerical short-stay provision generated by a strict application of the Parking Standards SPD, but considers that the specialist, class-based nature of the gym and anticipated travel characteristics of its users justify a lower provision. Having regard to the scale and particular operation of the development, the availability of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure immediately adjoining the site and the absence of objection from the Highway Authority, the proposed provision is considered acceptable. Its provision and retention can be secured by condition.

The Parking Standards SPD would also ordinarily indicate two servicing spaces for the equivalent leisure use. However, the development is not comparable to a large health club or conventional gym with significant servicing requirements. The applicant anticipates relatively limited delivery activity associated with the Scout, charity, café and class-based fitness uses and considers that dedicated servicing bays are therefore unnecessary. Given the nature and scale of the proposed activities, this is considered reasonable and would not justify the provision of additional hardstanding solely for servicing purposes.

Policy TR4 of the NPPF (2026) also requires parking arrangements to meet the needs of disabled users and to make adequate provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Appropriate accessible parking and electric vehicle charging provision should therefore be provided as part of the completed development in accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards. This can be secured through the approved plans and/or an appropriately worded condition.

- *Refuse arrangements*

Policy DM1 of the EBLP requires development to provide an appropriate and functional layout and to avoid adverse effects upon the character and amenity of its surroundings. A dedicated refuse storage location forms part of the proposed development and is incorporated within the site layout. Given the nature of the uses proposed and the commercial context of the site, the refuse arrangements are considered acceptable subject to the approved facilities being provided prior to first occupation and retained thereafter. This can appropriately be secured by condition.

- *Conclusion*

The redevelopment would retain an established access, formalise and increase the parking available within the site and provide 17 car parking spaces against a calculated requirement of 12 for the most parking-intensive element of the development. The complementary operating patterns of the Scout, fitness, charity and café uses would limit periods of peak overlap, whilst the class-based nature of the fitness use would provide a

greater degree of control over occupancy and associated parking demand than would arise from a conventional open-access gym.

The additional traffic generated by the development would be modest in the context of the surrounding industrial estate road network and the Highway Authority raises no objection. Subject to conditions securing the approved parking and cycle provision and appropriate controls over the operation of the uses, the development would provide safe and suitable access, would not give rise to unacceptable parking or highway safety impacts and would not have a severe adverse impact upon the operation of the highway network. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in accordance with policies DM13 and DM14 of the EBLP, the Parking Standards SPD, and policies TR3, TR4 and TR6 of the NPPF (2026).

Ecology and Biodiversity

Policy DM11 of the EBLP seeks to protect, conserve and enhance sites, habitats and features of nature conservation importance and to avoid unacceptable impacts upon protected species. Policy S9 provides the wider strategic framework for the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and ecological networks. At national level, policy N2 of the NPPF (2026) requires development to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity, conserve and enhance natural features where possible and incorporate appropriate measures to support priority or threatened species, including bats, swifts and hedgehogs. Policy N2 specifically encourages the incorporation of integrated nesting features into new development.

A Preliminary Roost Assessment and subsequent bat activity surveys have been undertaken. The initial assessment identified the existing Scout building as having moderate potential to support roosting bats, principally because of potential access points associated with the roof and soffits. The smaller shed was assessed as having negligible suitability. Two dusk emergence surveys were therefore subsequently undertaken. No bats were observed emerging from or re-entering the buildings and the ecological consultant concludes that no further survey, mitigation or compensation is required in respect of roosting bats. Common pipistrelle and noctule bats were nevertheless recorded using the vicinity of the site, confirming some use of the surrounding habitat by bats.

The two mature oak trees at the rear were also assessed and were found to contain no potential bat roost features. The trees and associated boundary vegetation nevertheless provide opportunities for bat foraging and commuting and connect with the wider network of vegetation beyond the site. Subject to their retention and appropriate control of lighting, the ecological assessment concludes that the development would not adversely affect commuting or foraging bat populations.

The site also provides potential nesting habitat for birds within the existing building, trees, hedges and shrubs. Appropriate precautionary measures would therefore be required where vegetation removal or demolition takes place during the bird nesting season. The Council's Ecologist has recommended that vegetation clearance should either occur outside the nesting season or follow a check by a suitably qualified ecologist, with appropriate protection provided should an active nest be identified. These measures can appropriately be secured by condition.

The site measures approximately 0.15 hectares. Since 6 August 2026, developments with a red-line site area of 0.2 hectares or less are exempt from the statutory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement, provided that priority habitat would not be affected. The habitats identified at this site comprise principally developed land, modified grassland, sparsely vegetated/derelict land and other relatively low-value habitats, and no priority habitat has been identified. The development is therefore exempt from the statutory BNG requirement and the statutory biodiversity gain condition would not apply.

The existing and proposed habitat plans nevertheless demonstrate opportunities to incorporate ecological improvements as part of the redevelopment, including new

grassland and areas of native scrub alongside the retention of the mature oak trees. The ecological reports also recommend specific species enhancements comprising at least one integrated bat box or bat brick within the new building, two integrated swift boxes and a further bird box within one of the retained oak trees. The Council's Ecologist supports these measures and additionally recommends wildlife-sensitive lighting, native scrub planting and an appropriate flowering lawn or shade-tolerant meadow mix beneath the retained oak trees. These measures are proportionate to the nature and scale of the development and can be secured through conditions.

It is noted that policy DM11 of the EBLP refers to seeking biodiversity net gain on development sites. However, policy N2(3) of the NPPF (2026) expressly advises that decision-makers should not give weight to development plan policies which require biodiversity gains beyond the statutory framework where the development concerned is exempt from statutory BNG. The proposal is therefore not required to demonstrate a quantified biodiversity net gain. This does not prevent appropriate ecological enhancement from being incorporated into the development, particularly the species-specific measures encouraged by policy N2(1)(f).

The ecological assessment and follow-up bat surveys provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the development would not result in unacceptable impacts upon protected species or other identified ecological interests. Subject to conditions the proposal would also incorporate proportionate ecological enhancement as part of the redevelopment. The development is therefore considered acceptable in ecological terms in accordance with policies S9 and DM11 of the EBLP and policy N2 of the NPPF (2026).

Residential Amenity

Policy DM1 of the EBLP requires development to protect the amenities of existing and future occupiers, including having regard to matters such as privacy, outlook, daylight and the relationship between neighbouring uses. Policy DM3 of the NPPF (2026) similarly seeks a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The replacement building would be substantially larger and two storeys in height, resulting in a greater physical presence than the existing single-storey Scout hut. However, the site lies within an established commercial and industrial estate and the proposed building would be viewed principally in the context of neighbouring commercial development. Having regard to the siting, scale and relationship of the development to the nearest residential properties, it would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy or outlook, nor would it have an unduly overbearing effect or result in a material loss of daylight.

The potential for disturbance arising from the operation of the proposed uses, including activity, plant and amplified music, is considered separately below. Subject to the operating-hour and noise conditions identified in that section, the development would preserve the amenities of neighbouring occupiers and is considered acceptable in accordance with policy DM1 of the EBLP and the relevant provisions of the NPPF (2026).

- Noise

Policies DM1 and DM8 of the EBLP seek to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable impacts upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, including through noise and other forms of pollution. Policy P3 of the NPPF (2026) similarly requires development to be appropriate for its location having regard to the effects of pollution on health and living conditions and, specifically, not to result in levels of noise exposure which would have a significant adverse effect.

A Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted. This considers noise associated with vehicle movements, users of the building and proposed mechanical plant, informed by a survey of the existing background sound environment. This is in the context of the location of the site within the established Chandler's Ford Industrial Estate and that it is surrounded predominantly by commercial and industrial premises.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has reviewed the submitted assessment and considers that noise associated with future vehicle movements and patron activity would present a low risk of significant disturbance to neighbouring premises.

The assessment also considers the two proposed air source heat pumps to be located adjacent to the external decking area to the north of the building. A BS4142 assessment has been undertaken which includes allowances for potential tonal and impulsive characteristics. This concludes that the proposed plant would result in a low risk of adverse impact, a conclusion accepted by the EHO.

The EHO initially sought clarification regarding the hours of operation because the noise assessment was based upon daytime background sound levels. The applicant has subsequently confirmed that the hours stated on the application form represent the maximum operating hours sought, being 06:00–22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00–13:00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, with the building opening at 06:00 to allow the earliest sessions to commence at 06:30 and all users leaving the site by 22:00. These hours can be secured by condition and the EHO raises no objection on this basis. Given that some fitness classes would involve amplified music, a condition is also recommended requiring that no amplified music is audible at the boundary of the application site. This would provide an appropriate safeguard during the early morning and evening operating periods.

Having regard to the commercial character of the surrounding area, the measured background sound environment, the findings of the Noise Impact Assessment, the nature and location of the proposed plant and the proposed controls over operating hours and amplified music, the development would not result in an unacceptable impact upon neighbouring amenity. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in accordance with policies DM1 and DM8 of the EBLP and policy P3 of the NPPF (2026).

Contaminated Land

Policy DM8 of the EBLP requires development to avoid unacceptable risks arising from pollution and contamination. Policy P2 of the NPPF (2026) similarly requires sites to be suitable for their proposed use having regard to ground conditions and contamination, with adequate investigation undertaken and any necessary remediation secured to ensure that the development is safe.

The Council's EHO has identified a potential contamination risk associated with the historic use of the surrounding land for brickworks/clay extraction, its subsequent industrial use and the likelihood of made ground being present beneath the site. The existing building also predates 2000 and asbestos-containing materials have been identified within its fabric. The site is within an area where less than 1% of properties are above the radon action level and no specific radon protection measures are therefore required.

Although the site itself has been occupied by the Scout Group since 1964, this does not exclude the possibility of contamination associated with the earlier use of the land or made ground. The EHO has therefore recommended that the contamination risk is investigated and, where necessary, remediated.

There is no objection to the principle of the development on contaminated-land grounds and the necessary investigations can appropriately be secured by condition. This would require a preliminary investigation comprising a desk study, conceptual site model and preliminary risk assessment, followed where necessary by intrusive site investigation, remediation and subsequent verification prior to occupation

With regards to asbestos, policy DM7 of the NPPF (2026) specifically identifies that planning decisions should not duplicate controls imposed by separate regulatory regimes. Asbestos is addressed through separate Health and Safety legislation, a condition is therefore not required.

Subject to these conditions, any contamination present can be appropriately identified and addressed before the development is brought into use. The site can therefore be made suitable for its proposed use without unacceptable risks to future users, construction workers or the wider environment, in accordance with policy DM8 of the EBLP and policy P2 of the NPPF (2026).

Drainage

Policies DM5 and DM6 of the EBLP seek to ensure that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere and incorporates appropriate sustainable drainage measures. In particular, policy DM6 requires new development to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), with non-naturalised measures such as permeable paving capable of being acceptable on sites of less than 0.5 hectares where justified. Policy F8 of the NPPF (2026) similarly requires development which could affect drainage to incorporate proportionate SuDS to control runoff rates and volumes, with appropriate maintenance arrangements.

The proposal would utilise the existing foul drainage connection serving the site. In this established urban location, connection to the existing foul sewerage network is considered an appropriate means of disposing of foul water arising from the development.

Surface water would be managed separately through a sustainable drainage strategy. Infiltration testing has demonstrated that the underlying ground conditions are unsuitable for infiltration. The proposed scheme therefore incorporates permeable paving within the parking areas. Rainwater harvesting is also proposed as part of the scheme.

The Council's Ecologist has reviewed the drainage information and notes that runoff from the proposed roof, parking and access areas represents a low pollution hazard and that the permeable paving would provide sufficient pollution mitigation. The proposed controlled discharge to the existing surface water sewer is therefore considered appropriate having regard to the inability of the site to accommodate infiltration and its established urban context.

Subject to the implementation and subsequent maintenance of the approved drainage measures, the development would appropriately manage foul and surface water drainage and would not be expected to increase flood risk or adversely affect water quality. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in accordance with policies DM5 and DM6 of the EBLP and policy F8 of the NPPF (2026).

Nutrient Neutrality

Policy DM11 of the EBLP requires development to avoid adverse effects upon internationally designated nature conservation sites. The requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are also relevant where development could result in effects upon nutrient-sensitive European sites within the Solent catchment. The proposal comprises the replacement and enhancement of an existing community facility and health/wellness facilities within the catchment. However, no residential or other overnight accommodation is proposed. Accordingly, the proposal does not require a nutrient budget or the securing of nutrient mitigation and is in accordance with policy DM11 of the EBLP and N6 of the NPPF (2026) and the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

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 2030; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality; (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 (2026), 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 (2026) 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.

- *Environmentally Sustainable Development*

Policies DM2 and DM3 of the EBLP seek to ensure that development achieves high standards of environmental sustainability and is capable of adapting to the predicted effects of climate change. Policy DM2 applies to non-residential development above 500sqm and requires BREEAM 'Excellent' or an equivalent standard, or BREEAM 'Very Good' together with Passivhaus certification in accordance with the detailed requirements of the policy. The policy also encourages passive design, efficient use of resources and flexibility to enable buildings to adapt to different uses over their lifetime.

Policy DM3 requires development to respond to matters including surface-water management, overheating and water efficiency. At national level, policy CC2 of the NPPF (2026) requires relevant development proposals to contribute to climate-change mitigation, including through energy-efficient design and renewable or low-carbon energy, whilst policy CC3 addresses adaptation to the effects of climate change. The NPPF (2026) specifically identifies heat pumps as a form of renewable or low-carbon provision which can contribute towards climate-change mitigation.

The proposal would replace an ageing single-storey building with a purpose-designed modern facility. The development incorporates air-source heat pumps, whilst its drainage strategy includes permeable paving, attenuation and rainwater harvesting. The proposal would also retain the principal mature trees and provide additional landscaping and ecological planting. Furthermore, the flexible and multi-functional nature of the building would allow a range of community and leisure activities to be accommodated within a single facility, extending its useful life and ability to respond to changing community needs.

Given the scale of the proposed building, compliance with the BREEAM requirement of policy DM2 should be secured. Subject to a condition requiring the appropriate BREEAM standard to be achieved and certified, together with implementation of the other sustainability measures identified within the application, the development is considered capable of complying with policies DM2 and DM3 of the EBLP and policies CC2 and CC3 of the NPPF (2026).

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

Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposal would replace an established but ageing Scout facility with a substantially improved and purpose-designed two-storey community building. The existing lawful community use would be retained and enhanced, whilst the development would introduce complementary fitness, wellness, charity and ancillary café uses which would significantly broaden the range of activities capable of taking place from the site.

The site lies within a designated employment area; however, it is already lawfully in community use and the proposal would not result in the loss or displacement of an existing safeguarded B2, B8 or E(g) employment use. The development would therefore not undermine the principal purpose of policy DM15. The recreational elements are supported in principle by policy DM34, whilst the proposal accords particularly strongly with part 3 of policy DM36 through the creation of a flexible, multi-functional community facility capable of accommodating a range of uses.

The locational requirements applying to the new leisure element have also been considered. The fitness and wellness provision forms part of the enhancement and diversification of the established Scout and community facility rather than comprising a freestanding commercial gym. For the reasons set out above, there is no realistic suitable, viable and available sequentially preferable location for the particular mixed-use development proposed. The development would not harm the vitality or viability of an existing centre and the requirements of policy DM36 and policies TC3 and TC4 of the NPPF (2026) are considered to be satisfied.

Significant positive weight is afforded to the community benefits of the proposal. The development would secure the future of an established Scout facility, improve the quality and flexibility of the accommodation and provide additional opportunities for community use, physical activity and social interaction. Of particular relevance, policy HC4 of the NPPF (2026) expressly requires substantial weight to be given to improved community facilities and to development which contributes towards promoting good health and supporting social interaction. The specialist fitness and charitable activities proposed would contribute directly towards these objectives.

The replacement building would be significantly larger than the existing Scout hut but would sit comfortably within the scale and massing of the surrounding industrial and commercial buildings. Its architecture would provide an appropriate and identifiable community character and the development would make considerably more efficient use of this established urban site. The proposal would therefore improve the quality of the built environment whilst making effective use of previously developed land.

The protected oak trees would be retained and, the development can be implemented without unacceptable harm to their long-term health or amenity value. Replacement landscaping and ecological enhancements would further soften the development and provide biodiversity benefits.

Protected-species surveys have not identified a constraint to development and the proposed bat, bird, planting and wildlife-sensitive lighting measures can be secured by condition.

There would be an increase in activity and vehicle movements compared with the existing Scout use. However, the proposed uses have complementary operating patterns and the class-based fitness model allows occupancy and parking demand to be controlled. Seventeen formal parking spaces would be provided against the applicant's calculated requirement of 12 for the most onerous use, while forecast additional peak-hour traffic

movements are modest. Subject to the conditions identified below, the proposal would not result in unacceptable parking, highway-safety or network impacts.

The submitted noise assessment demonstrates that the proposed uses and mechanical plant can operate without unacceptable effects upon neighbouring amenity, subject to controls over operating hours and amplified music. Potential contaminated-land risks can be satisfactorily addressed through investigation and remediation conditions, whilst foul and surface-water drainage can be appropriately managed through the proposed drainage strategy.

There are no identified adverse impacts which would outweigh the considerable benefits of the proposal. The development would retain and significantly enhance an established community facility, provide additional recreation, health and social benefits, make more effective use of an urban site and improve the quality and flexibility of the facilities available to the local community.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the development plan when read as a whole and with the relevant national decision-making policies of the NPPF (2026). Planning permission is recommended, subject to the conditions set out below.

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

Comments ...