

Planning Policy Comments by Warren Jackson-Hookins (Planning Policy Specialist)

Site Address: Moorlands Farm, Botley Road, West End

Application Reference: F/22/93835

Date of Comments: 17 October 2022

Planning Policy Comments

The Council adopted the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 on 25th April 2022. This document now forms the planning policy framework for the borough until 2036.

Countryside

Comments are provided on the acceptability of the proposal for employment development on land which is designated as countryside under Strategic Policy S5. This states that planning permission will be granted for new development in the countryside provided it meets the noted criteria such as whether it is related to the extension and replacement of existing employment uses (policy DM18). It further states amongst other things that in permitting new development in the countryside the Borough Council will seek to avoid adverse impacts such as upon the rural and woodland character and on the biodiversity of the area and seek to secure long-term beneficial management practices that will enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the countryside.

The key considerations of this proposal when assessing it against the criteria in policy DM18, Extension and replacement of non-residential buildings in the countryside are those which relate to the density, scale, massing, layout and height (criterion c) and avoiding detrimental impacts upon the character of the countryside (criterion d). It is observed that the footprint of some of the proposed buildings will not be located on the existing developed areas and would be located on what appears to be undeveloped parts of the site. The footprint of the employment buildings which are proposed to be located outside the existing developed parts of the site would constitute a material change of use of land designated as countryside and as such would not be acceptable.

The criteria in policy DM1, General criteria for new development will also be important to consider with regards to the overall design proposed and with regards to development not having an adverse impact on, and where possible enhancing the countryside amongst other things. It is noted that the proposal could potentially help to improve the overall appearance of the site which is currently in a state of disrepair whilst any urbanising effect would be minimised. This is due to its location adjacent to an existing employment estate to the east provided the overall scale and massing of the proposed buildings (less floorspace compared to the previously withdrawn outline proposal) would not be considered to materially alter the character of the site. The applicant has also proposed mitigation measures which go further compared those in the previously withdrawn outline application with regards to the provision of informal woodland, priority habitats, native woodland, native hedging and a SuDS pond and basin on the site.

Employment Provision

The principle of employment development would be acceptable and would contribute to the Council's wider employment land supply targets whereby a total of 2,124sq.m. of new employment floorspace is proposed (gross internal area). With regards to criterion h in Policy DM18, the

development would not by itself or cumulatively with other recently permitted schemes undermine the Council's strategy for the development of employment-related floor space (see policy S4). This is due to the loss of existing employment floorspace on protected employment sites and the development of some employment allocations for other uses over recent years. It is also noted that the applicant has reduced the floorspace of the proposed scheme due to the above noted concern of developing on the undeveloped countryside.

BREEAM (Pre-Assessment Stage)

The applicant is advised to undertake a design stage BREEAM assessment at the earliest opportunity. Policy DM2, Environmental sustainable development states that all other development (which can include employment uses) that is above 500sq.m of floor space measured externally (including extensions and conversions to existing buildings) must achieve; i. BREEAM 'excellent' (or equivalent) or BREEAM 'very good' plus 'passivhaus' certification including a 15% improvement in predicted carbon emissions, compared with the building regulations current at the time, through low or zero carbon energy generation on site or in a Borough location agreed by the Council. The applicant has indicated the intention for the scheme to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' in the submitted Design and Access Statement. It is noted that an Accredited Assessor has been appointed at this early design stage to assist the development in achieving the required BREEAM level. Whilst this has been stated by the applicant, it is noted that no pre-assessment appears to have been submitted at this stage. Further clarification is therefore required from the applicant on when this is likely to be submitted.

Concluding Comments

The proposal for redeveloping the site for employment uses will be acceptable provided that the proposed biodiversity related mitigation measures are considered to outweigh any loss to the proposed undeveloped areas of countryside within the curtilage of the site. It is observed that development proposed on the undeveloped countryside will be less substantial compared to the previously withdrawn outline planning application due to the smaller scale of the proposal in terms of the overall amount of floorspace proposed (853sq.m less than the previously withdrawn outline consent). This will help to ensure that the overall character of the site is protected in accordance with Strategic Policy S5 of the 2016-2036 Local Plan.

The Council's Design Team may also be able to provide a view of the proposal. Comments on ecology, highways, access and traffic related matters will also help to inform whether the revised proposal will be acceptable in principle.