

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

Site Address: Moorlands Farm, Botley Road, West End

Application Reference: F/23/96586

Date of Comments: 27 February 2024

Planning Policy Comments

The Council adopted the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 on 25th April 2022. This document 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of the proposed buildings will be located on undeveloped parts of the site although less so compared to the previously withdrawn outline planning application and the refused full planning application which is currently subject to an appeal. 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 further 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 which has been reduced further 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 planning application and full planning application currently subject to an appeal with regards to additional ecological enhancements that will be integrated into the fabric of the courtyard and soft landscaping plans for native flora and fauna that will result in a biodiversity net gain (BNG) benefit overall.

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 1,076.68sq.m (GIA) 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 further reduced the floorspace of this latest proposal in order to focus this principally within the existing built areas of the site.

BREEAM (Pre-Assessment Stage)

The applicant has submitted a BREEAM Pre-Assessment with the latest proposal. This targets a score of 79.77% which translates into a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. This is in accordance with Policy DM2, Environmentally sustainable development of the adopted Local Plan which has a requirement for BREEAM 'Excellent' or BREEAM 'Very Good' plus 'passivhaus' certification including a 15% improvement in predicted carbon emissions. The applicant should ensure that a drop off in credits to a 'Very Good' rating is avoided in the later stages of the assessment.

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 and full planning application currently subject to appeal due to lower overall amount of floorspace proposed. This will help to further 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.