

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
Southampton City Council
Transport and Planning Service –
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Our Reference: 23/01067/FUL
Your Reference: CS/23/95904

By Email

17th November 2023

Dear Summer

Site Address: The Old Fairground, Botley Road, Southampton SO19 0NL

Proposal: Erection of a two-storey 3-bedroom dwelling with associated amenities with phased removal of existing mobile home

Thank you for your consultation for the above planning application. Apologies for the delay in response but it appears we did not receive your original consultation letter.

I can confirm that, as an application crossing the administrative boundary, Southampton are in receipt of an identical application to that submitted to Eastleigh Borough Council (our reference 23/01067/FUL).

To date, no third-party objections to our application have been received and none of the consultees have raised adverse comments.

Planning History

Historically, the site has been used by travelling showpeople on an intermittent basis and, in approximately 2014, this use became more permanent in nature and a planning application to regularise the use was subsequently submitted to and approved by the City Council (our reference 15/01775/FUL). The application approved by Southampton included the use of the site for the storage of fairground equipment and the siting of residential caravans. This included a new access from Botley Road and the closure of a historic access from the junction of Botley Road/Bursledon Road. This permission did not restrict the amount or size of equipment stored on the site or the number of residential plots., although a condition was imposed upon the consent to retain and enhance the boundary landscaping.

Subsequently, the site expanded on the Eastleigh side of the boundary with further storage and residential plots and a new access from Bursledon Road. The site has now essentially been split into two and I understand that the two parts of the site are used independently from one another.

Planning Policy

In terms of the Southampton context, our Development Plan currently comprises the “saved” policies of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review (as amended 2015) and the City of Southampton Core Strategy (as amended 2015).

The site is identified in the Southampton Development Plan as forming part of the Strategic Gap between Southampton and Eastleigh. Policy CS21 of our Core Strategy confirms that the Council will seek to protect the Strategic Gap to maintain its open character. Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy specifically relates to accommodation for travelling showpeople and confirms the City Council’s commitment to providing sufficient sites to meet local need and requires this need to be balanced in terms of other material considerations, including impact on residential amenity, highways and landscape.

Southampton City Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Final Report September 2021 highlights a need for additional accommodation for the community. At this time, the city Council has not identified any new sites to meet the identified need.

Consideration of the Key Issues

In my view, the central issue for consideration in this application is the balance between the benefits of providing a dwelling to meet the needs of the travelling showpeople community and the effect of the proposal on the Eastleigh/Southampton Strategic Gap.

I note that the applicant for the current development is Mr Cole, who has a long connection with the site and his business as a travelling showperson is operated from the site. I also note that Mr Cole’s personal circumstances means that a mobile dwelling is no-longer best suited to his needs.

Whilst the site currently is used to contain equipment and residences of significant size, there are no other permanent above-ground structures on the site, other than boundary fencing. Currently, the appearance of the site will change throughout the year as equipment is moved on and off the site. Although, it is acknowledged that, even in peak travelling season, the site will remain in use.

The scale and massing of the proposed dwelling is much greater than existing mobile home and it will be apparent from Bursledon Road, especially given the openness of the site access and the absence of landscaping abutting the access internally. The proposed permanent dwelling would inevitably result in a change from the transient appearance of the site. Currently, Botley Road provides the distinct urban edge of the city. There is one nearby dwelling to the east of Botley Road, although this is set back approximately 23m from the road, well screened by landscape planting and its proximity to the junction means it reads more as a marker to the commencement of the urban area. By contrast, the proposed dwelling would not readily relate to other existing points of development, appearing somewhat isolated within the surrounding context.

The Planning Balance

I agree that the introduction of a permanent dwelling would erode the effectiveness of the Strategic Gap in this location, particularly over the longer-term. The dwelling would be visible from public vantage points, particularly through the site access on the approach to the City of Southampton, particularly due to its scale, massing and positioning, adjacent to the open site access.

That said, the balance of considerations is slightly different for Southampton City Council than for Eastleigh Borough Council. In particular, the City Council does not have an equivalent policy which resists the replacement of temporary dwellings with permanent dwellings in this location. Furthermore, Southampton City Council neither has an alternative supply of sites for travelling showpeople nor a five-year supply of site for other forms of housing. Taking this into account, together with the personal circumstances of the applicant and the current visual condition of the strategic gap at this point, in my view, outweighs the visual harm to the gap for the City Council.

Please note that, were Eastleigh minded to support the principle of development in this location, Southampton would not support the application in its current form. We would require a green landscaped screen to the eastern side of the dwelling rather than the current situation with the close-boarded fencing along the access. We would also seek the creation of a domestic setting to the house, i.e., a landscaped front and rear garden rather than the storage/lorry turning area being the setting to the dwelling. The roadside landscaping would also need to be enhanced to screen the dwelling more effectively.

In addition to this, we would note that contaminated land and archaeology issues also need resolution.

I hope this information is of use to you in progressing matters but if you wish to discuss further, please get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Jenna Turner
Regeneration Planning Manager