

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/24/96848

Site Address: 2 Romsey Road, Eastleigh, SO50 9FE

Case Officer: David Huckfield

Description: Change of use from private members / social club (sui generis use) to mixed use of place of worship (F1(f) use) and community centre (F2(b) use), to include retention of ancillary residential accommodation.

Relevant Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Within the Urban Edge Existing Community Facility Within Urban Renaissance Quarter, Eastleigh		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Z/24160/000/00	Two-storey residential development	GRANT OUTLINE PERMISSION - 1980
Z/24160/001/00	Erection of Railway Institute Social Club and caretakers accommodation and construction of bowling green on land	GRANT OUTLINE PERMISSION - 1980
Z/24160/002/00	The erection of Railway Institute Social Club, Caretaker's Accommodation and construction of bowling green	PERMIT - 1980
A/24160/003/00	Illuminated painted pole sign	CONSENTED - 1982
Z/24160/005/00	Erection of illuminated box sign	CONSENTED - 1987
Z/24160/006/00	SITING OF PORTABLE BUILDING FOR USE AS CHANGING ROOM AND INCREASE IN HEIGHT OF BOUNDARY FENCE TO 2.6 METRES	PERMIT - 1993
T/22/92783	1 no. oak (T1) - Reduce side towards building by 2m back to natural growth points.	CONSENTED - 2022

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☐	Newspaper ☐
Representations	One letter of representation was received in relation to the application from the occupier of No. 17 Meadow Grove, Chandlers Ford, with the following comments being made: <i>Concerned about the inadequate parking spaces for a proposed place of worship. Will every visitor walk or cycle to venue?</i> <i>Deduct resident parking spaces equals less parking on site.</i> <i>Where is contractor parking?</i> <i>How will refuse bins be emptied by HGV's accessing/exiting site.</i> <i>Nearby roads/car parks will become over spill for vehicle parking.</i> <i>Busy highway, numerous side junctions, doctor's surgery, supermarket, various other HMO's/flats developing in the town.</i> <i>Sustainability?</i>		

Eastleigh Town Council	No objection
HCC Highways	In regard to application F/24/96848, having reviewed the information contained within the application pack, there would be no objection to the proposals from a highway perspective. No changes are proposed in regard to access in and out of the site from the highway, and in regard to parking, whilst on-site parking is limited, there is adequate public parking available in the local area. Additionally, the site is well placed for sustainable transport use being in close proximity to both bus and train stations and residential areas.
Environmental Health	No objection.

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
A site visit was undertaken by the Case Officer to review the proposals in context		

Policy: Legislative Background: Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan: The Development Plan comprises of the Saved Policies of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036. The following policies are of relevance to the application: The Development Plan comprises the Policies of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036. The relevant policies to this application are: S1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), S2 (Approach to New Development), DM1 (General Criteria for New Development), DM2 (Environmentally Sustainable Development), DM3 (Adaption to Climate Change), DM8 (Pollution), DM11 (Nature Conservation), DM12 (Heritage Assets), DM13 (General Development Criteria – Transport), DM14 (Parking), DM36 (Community, Leisure and Cultural Facilities). Other material considerations: <u>National Planning Policy/Guidance:</u> The latest iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF or Framework) was published in December 2023 and as set out within paragraph 224 the policies contained within it are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication. The Planning Practice Guidance provides additional guidance in support of the policies within the Framework and is also a material consideration in the determination of the application.

Assessment: <u>Principle of the development and the change of use proposed:</u> The application site lies within the urban edge as well as being within the designated Eastleigh Urban Renaissance Quarter (Policy E4) within the Council's adopted Local Plan. In addition, and as a social club, the premises would be deemed to constitute an existing community facility to which the provisions of Policy DM36 apply. Policy E4 seeks to encourage well-designed, people-intensive development that raises the quality of the main approaches to Eastleigh Town Centre. The policy also recognises the range of uses, which includes community facilities and those relating to cultural activities,
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that complement and support the function of the town centre and provide variety and choice for residents. Policy DM36 seeks to protect against the loss of existing community facilities unless it is demonstrated that alternative provision is made which is more appropriate to the needs of the community, or is more accessible; or the existing facility is shown to be surplus to local needs. Where the latter is the case, facilities should where possible be re-developed/re-used in a way that maximises benefits to the local community.

The site has been used as a social club for the Railway Institute since its original construction in the early 1980s. Whilst no direct evidence has been provided with the proposals to demonstrate that the premises is no longer required as a social club in general terms, its recent cessation of trading as the Railway Institute has left it vacant and indicates that it is surplus to requirements for this specific purpose. It is also evident that such facilities have, in more recent times, often faced challenges in respect of maintaining sufficient membership levels to continue to be commercially viable.

Taking account of this and, most significantly, that the proposed use as a place of worship / community centre will see the premises re-occupied and re-used for a purpose which would serve and benefit the local community, which would include the retention of the bowls club to the rear of the premises that would be deemed to be ancillary to the community use, it is considered that the proposed change of use is acceptable in principle, with the proposals according with the overarching aims of Policies DM36 and E4 of the adopted Local Plan. The retention of the residential accommodation within the building is similarly considered to be acceptable, with this being proposed to be used by a Community Centre Manager for the building and thereby remaining ancillary to the principle use.

Design, layout and impact on the character of the area:

The alterations to be undertaken as part of the proposals are limited to changing the function of certain internal rooms and the removal of the existing bar equipment, with no external works being proposed. As such, the development will have no notable impact on the exterior of the premises or how it appears within the street scene. Similarly, there will be no discernible impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Church of the Resurrection which lies to the immediate east of the site.

Taking account of these factors, the development is considered to comply with the requirements of Policies DM1, DM12 and E4 in terms of its design, layout and impact on the character of the area, including nearby heritage assets.

Highway matters:

The application proposes no alterations to the vehicular access to the premises, which is currently taken from Romsey Road, with the on-site parking which is situated to the eastern side of the building to also be maintained. The access is considered to be suitable in highway terms and, whilst the on-site parking is acknowledged to be relatively limited, there is adequate public parking available in the nearby vicinity as noted by the highway authority in their consultation response. The site is also particularly well-served by public transport being on the edge of Eastleigh Town Centre and thereby in the most sustainable part of the Borough. The applicant has confirmed that the existing waste collection and servicing arrangements will also be maintained and, having regard to the nature of the existing and proposed uses, this is considered to be acceptable in this case.

Overall, therefore, it is considered that the development is acceptable in highway terms and complies with the requirements of Policies DM13 and DM14 of the adopted Local Plan.

Residential amenity:

The nearest residential use to the application site lies to its eastern side in the form of Bernie Tunstall Place (the former Church of the Resurrection which was subsequently converted). As noted above, the application premises has until recently been used as a social club (the Railway Institute). This use operated under a planning permission which was granted in 1980 (see Z/24160/001 (outline consent) and Z/24160/002/00 (detailed consent)) and which was unrestricted in terms of opening hours. It is understood however that the social club had, until its closure, opened until 11pm in the evening, although it benefitted from a premises licence for a range of activities including but not limited to live music, recorded music, facilities for dancing and supply by retail of alcohol, which were authorised until 1am (midnight on Sundays).

The application proposes to align with the previous opening hours of the social club and thereby would operate until 11pm which is considered to be acceptable in this case. Whilst acknowledging that this is relatively late into the evening and that, given the nature of the use, it is likely that there may be music played at varying times, it is not considered that the impacts arising from the use proposed would be any more intensive or impactful upon residential amenity than the current authorised use of the premises and no objection has been raised on these grounds by the Council's Environmental Health team. It is also a material consideration, that should any disturbance arise in future that generates complaints from neighbouring residents, this could be investigated separately (outside of the planning process) under statutory nuisance legislation.

Finally in respect of residential amenity, the proposals include the retention of the existing residential accommodation which is situated on the first floor of the premises. Whilst there is potential for a degree of disturbance to occur from the proposed use to the occupiers of this accommodation given that it is inside the building itself and thereby above and abutting function space, this is not considered to be unacceptable in this case given that the accommodation is proposed to be occupied by a Community Centre Manager who will be employed by the centre and directly engaged in the operations and activities carried out within it. A condition will be imposed to control the occupation of this accommodation in the interests of residential amenity.

Taking account of the above factors and with conditions imposed to limit hours of opening to those applied for and to restrict the occupation of the residential accommodation within the building, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Local Plan in respect of residential amenity.

Nature conservation:

As the proposals consist of a change of use with no external alterations proposed, there are considered to be no likely significant impacts on either local or European designated sites for nature conservation.

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 and development plan 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. When considering the impact of climate

change, the proposed development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change and is expected to limit impacts on climate emissions as a result of the development or its use.

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.

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐