

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/24/97844

Site Address: River Itchen Water Treatment Works, Allington Lane,, Southampton,, SO30 3HQ

Case Officer: Gary Osmond

Description: A new permanent building to house a centrifuge; alongside a balancing tank, sludge cake skip and adjacent hard standing for temporary pallet storage at the site known as River Itchen Water Treatment Works (WTW), Allington Lane, Southampton, SO30 3HQ.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Outside the Urban Edge - Within Settlement Gap		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Various applications relating to the waterworks, gas generators and solar panels.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	One representation received highlighted previous problems with building works at the waterworks site and querying a number of aspects.		
West End Parish Council:	No comments received.		
Environmental Health (Noise):	No objection in principle provided it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not result in increased noise to nearby residential properties. A condition requiring an acoustic assessment to be submitted and approved by the LPA prior to the centrifuge being installed is recommended.		
Environmental Health (Pollution):	No objection with the proposed development in terms of contamination and air quality.		
Hampshire Highways:	No objection to the proposals from a highway perspective. It is understood that a temporary centrifuge and associated infrastructure are already in place, and this application simply replaces this will a permanent structure. No access changes from the highway are proposed, and staffing, delivery movements and servicing requirements will remain the same, with Polymer deliveries every 8 – 10 weeks, and sludge cake skip removal every 2 - 4 weeks (Transport Statement). These low level (and existing) movements are unlikely to cause a noticeable highway impact.		
Ecology:	No formal comments received.		

Site Visit:	Yes ☐	No ☒
Details: The case officer has visited the site for previous applications. In addition, the proposed development is located centrally within the site and is shielded from public views by other buildings within the waterworks complex (see aerial photographs).		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The <u>Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036</u> The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2, S5 and S6; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM6, DM8, DM9, DM10, DM11, DM13 and DM18. Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals; Biodiversity.

Assessment:
Site Context: The site lies outside the urban edge and within an area designated as a settlement gap, lying north of the M27 motorway and south of Itchen Valley Country Park. The site forms part of a larger site used by Portsmouth Water for water extraction, storage and treatment. The site consists of a number of buildings and structures, including gas generators and solar panels for electricity production. The main site is accessed from Allington Lane to the east of the site via an access road, which includes a number of residential dwellings along its length. To the west is the River Itchen and water meadows, with the whole site being generally shielded from public view by woodland and thick tree belts. Proposals: The application proposes the construction of a modest single storey building to house a centrifuge, together with associated external equipment and tank which is used to remove silt from extracted river water before it is treated and used for drinking water. This equipment is already on site, albeit in a different position and not housed in a dedicated building. Policy & Principle: The site lies outside the urban edge where the general principle of development is not usually acceptable. However, Policy S5 does set out development which may be considered acceptable in the countryside, which includes “essential public utilities”, provided the development meets the requirements of Policy DM9. This states that “The development of new and improvement of existing utilities infrastructure essential to meet the needs of new and existing communities will be encouraged and permitted subject to the other policies of this plan.” Policy DM18 allows the extension and replacement of non-residential buildings in the countryside provided certain criteria are met which essentially requires the development to have no or very minimal harm upon the character and appearance of the countryside. In addition, the site is within a designated settlement gap where development will only be accepted provided it does not undermine “the physical extent and / or visual separation of settlements” and does not “have an urbanising effect detrimental to” the countryside or separate identity of adjoining settlements (Policy S6). Also of relevance is Policy DM1 which requires any new development to take appropriate account of the site and its surrounding context; to be of a good standard of design; to

ensure impact upon the amenity of neighbouring uses and occupiers is minimised or appropriately mitigated; and where necessary to include new landscape planting.

In principle, therefore the provision of the new structures to house the centrifuge is acceptable in principle. However, any planning approval will be dependent upon the impact of that proposed and how well it is considered to accord with the adopted Local Plan policies.

Layout, Form, Scale & Design:

The centrifuge building will be positioned to the north of the largest building on site, which will screen it from any available views from the south. It will also be screened from view by an existing building to its east. The building will be approximately 12 metres long by 4.9 metres wide, with a ridge height of 4.8 metres. It will be of a simple industrial appearance, having a concrete block based and green steel cladding to the walls and roof. At one end will be a loading door, as well as other pedestrian doors. Externally, the building will be neighboured by a water storage tank of a similar height, as well as covered area of hardstanding which will accommodate a 17yrd skip. The skip will be where extracted silt will be stored before being taken away to be disposed of elsewhere.

In terms of form, scale and design, that proposed is smaller than most other structures on site and is considered to be appropriate in terms of the nature of the site.

Area Character & Landscape Impact:

Whilst outside the urban edge and within a settlement gap, the site does have the appearance of an industrial/large scale agricultural use. The modest scale and location of the centrifuge building, and associated tank and canopy will not therefore appear out of place within the existing context. As such, it is not considered that it would result in any unacceptable harm to the appearance or character of the locality.

Highways:

Whilst the extracted silt will need to be taken away from the site to be disposed of, this is likely to involve a single lorry trip approximately once a week. This will have no impact upon the local highway network and would accord with Policy DM13.

Amenity:

Whilst the one representation received did not raise any issues with that proposed, concerns were raised regarding disturbance during its construction. These concerns appear to relate to past problems with other larger scale construction works previously undertaken on site. Although these concerns are noted, the modest scale and simple construction of that proposed should not require any largescale building works, with most of the problems reported relating more to management of the site rather than the actual development.

Notwithstanding, measures can be undertaken to protect the amenity of nearby residents during construction through the restriction of working hours, and adherence to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which has been submitted in support of the planning application.

Once in operation, it is not expected that the centrifuge and associated equipment will have any significant impact upon the amenity of nearby residential properties, given that it will be within a building and shielded by other existing structures. Notwithstanding, the Council's Environmental Health team have recommended a condition requiring an acoustic assessment to be undertaken prior to installation of the centrifuge to demonstrate what if any impact it may have in terms of noise disturbance.

In terms of other amenity issues such as privacy, light and outlook, that proposed raises no concerns.

Drainage:

All water involved in the centrifuge process will be retained within the water treatment system. None will be disposed of on site. As such, the only drainage to consider is surface water drainage from the new area of hardstanding and roof of the building, which will be dealt with via the existing on-site drainage provisions.

Trees & Ecology:

Whilst there are no trees on or adjacent to the site which could be impacted by the proposed development, due to the site area to be impacted, there is a requirement for the development to provide a biodiversity net-gain of 10%. The supporting documentation shows that the existing site is currently poor-quality grassland, which raises no concerns in terms of its loss. Notwithstanding, a 10% net-gain still needs to be demonstrated. As such, it is proposed to improve an existing area of poor-quality grassland close to the site of the centrifuge building to a medium quality grassland.

No specific details as to how this will be undertaken or how it will be managed for the future have been provided. However, in this instance, given that it will not involve any significant work or specialist management measures, it is considered that these details can be provided by condition following determination of the planning application.

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 Environment 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, 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 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.

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 reduce/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

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒**REFUSE** ☐

For the reasons set out above, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions requiring the following:

- Approved drawings;
- Commencement within three years;
- Submission of a CEMP;
- Construction hours;
- Materials as set out;
- Submission of noise assessment; and
- Submission of biodiversity net-gain measures.