

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/24/97868

Site Address: THE ROLL CALL, WOOLSTON ROAD, NETLEY ABBEY,
SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 5FJ

Case Officer: Gary Osmond

Description: Change of use from Public House (Sui Generis) to Offices & Storage (Class E(g)), with associated alterations to the building and externals including erection of palisade fencing

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☐	No ☒
- Within the urban edge - Adjacent to countryside and settlement gap		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
F/19/86095 – Replace all single glazed crittall windows with modern upvc double glazed units on 3 elevations of the building – Approved March 2017		
F/16/78438 – Single storey side extension to form entrance – Approved June 2016		
Z/28147/001/00 – Construction of single storey side and rear extensions to form new toilet and bottle store – Approved June 2003		
Z/28147/000/00 – Alterations and extension to public house – Approved April 1985		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	A total of 69 representations have been received, all but 12 in support of the proposed change of use. Those objecting have raised the following concerns: - Loss of the pub - Works commenced before any planning approval has been granted - Erection of fencing - Loss of trees - Impact on wildlife - Flooding - Increased traffic - Has no benefit to the local community - Not an appropriate business for the locality (builder's merchants) Those in support have welcomed the site being brought back into use and that the original building is to be retained. The fact that the business is an established local business wishing to stay in the area has also been highlighted.		
Hound Parish Council:	No objection.		
Environmental Health:	No objection to proposed office use. However, there may be concerns relating to the external storage area and how this may be used and what is to be stored externally, as this may result in noise and disturbance to adjacent residential properties.		

Hampshire Highways:	No objection from a highway perspective.
Trees:	No objection provided the construction exclusion zone is conditioned.

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 09/09/2024 – See separate 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 & S4; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM8, DM11, DM13, DM14 & DM36. Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals; Trees and Development.

Assessment: Site Context: The application site sits on the north-eastern edge of Netley Abbey, towards the northern end of Woolston Road. It is a former public house, known as 'The Roll Call', a two storey red brick domestically scaled building with a pitched roof. To the front is a parking area, with a dual in-out pair of vehicular accesses, with further parking to the north-eastern side. To the rear is what was previously used as the pub's beer garden. To the south and west of the site is predominantly residential development, consisting of a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings of varying ages and architectural styles. To the north are open fields used predominantly for grazing, and to the east is woodland. In terms of boundary treatments, the south-eastern boundary with the neighbouring residential dwellings is marked by a 1.8 metre high close board timber fence atop a metre high earth bank. The north-east boundary with the adjoining fields is marked by a post and wire fence, together with a number of trees, albeit this boundary is relatively open. The north-western boundary is marked by a 2.0 metre high diamond-wire fence which surrounds the neighbouring plot of land, which appears to be used for the storage of vehicles. Finally, the south-western boundary onto Woolston Road is marked by a low post and rail timber fence, but again is generally open onto the street frontage, including the freestanding pub sign. Proposals: The application seeks consent for the change of use of the premises from a public house (sui generis) to offices and ancillary storage facilities (Class E(g)) for a local construction firm – Venture Construction Services – who specialise in refurbishments and fit-outs of hospitals, care homes, retirement properties, schools and colleges. The company is currently based in Woolston, Southampton, but hopes to move their main offices to Netley given the company directors' links to the local area. Externally, the building will be refurbished with new windows, etc, with most alterations being internal to make it more suited to the intended office functions. The existing parking area to the side of the building, together with the rear boundary are enclosed by a 2.0 metre high metal palisade fence. This will be used for staff and company vehicle parking, as well as three shipping containers, which will be used for storage of materials. The site
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frontage will remain open but is to be landscaped, including retention of the existing freestanding pub sign.

Policy & Principle:

The application site lies within the urban edge where the basic principle of development is acceptable. However, any planning approval will be dependent upon how well that proposed is considered to accord with the relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan. The most relevant policies in this instance are DM1, DM8, DM13 and DM36.

Policy DM1 requires all new development to: take appropriate account of the site and its surrounding context; to be of a high standard of design; ensure impact upon neighbouring occupiers and uses is not adversely impacted, or that suitable mitigation is provided; as well as ensuring natural features worthy of retention are not harmed, and that proposals include new landscaping where appropriate.

DM8 relates to pollution, which in this instance will relate to potential noise disturbance as a result of the development proposed.

DM13 relates to the transport impact of new development and is linked to Policy DM14 which requires appropriate parking provision for new development.

Finally, Policy DM36 relates to community, leisure and cultural facilities. Part 5 of this policy states that “The loss of existing community, leisure or cultural facilities to other forms of development will not be permitted unless: alternative provision is made which is more appropriate to the needs of the community, or is more accessible; or the existing facility can be shown to be surplus to local needs.”

Loss of Public House:

The Roll Call closed in March 2022, when the then leaseholders decided not to continue for personal reasons. The pub was marketed by the site owners ‘The Wellington Pub Company’ for 18 months, apparently with no success in finding a new landlord. A number of those who have objected to the application have questioned how well the pub was marketed and have suggested that the then site owners purposely chose to prevent any new landlords from taking it on in order to sell the site for development. How true these comments are is not for the LPA to comment upon, but the LPA has no evidence to suggest that the background information contained within the application’s supporting statement is untrue.

Whilst the closure of the pub is unfortunate, it is not unusual in the current climate, particularly for pubs which predominantly only cater for the local population. Ultimately, had the pub been profitable and as well frequented as has been suggested, it would likely still be open.

In planning policy terms, specifically Policy DM36, it is noted that Netley Abbey is generally quite well served in terms of drinking establishments. There is ‘The Cottage Pub’ a couple of hundred metres further down Woolston Road serving the eastern side of the village, with ‘The Prince Consort’ off Victoria Road serving the western half of the village. In addition, there is ‘Woodies’ wine bar off Grange Road and a number of restaurants and social clubs elsewhere within the village. That being the case, it is clear that the local area is well served with “alternative provision” being available elsewhere. The fact that The Roll Call closed, with no viable interest in anyone else taking it on as a going concern would appear to suggest that it was “surplus to local need.” That being the case, it is considered that the relevant requirements of Policy DM36 have been met, meaning that a suitable change of use can be considered.

Layout, Form, Scale, Design & Street Scene:

As mentioned above, externally the building is to be refurbished and should still retain the appearance of its former use. The only noticeable change to the site externally is the erection of a 2.0 metre high palisade fence to the side and rear of the building. This fence has already been put in place, as well as internal refurbishment work begun, which has

been a further reason for objection. However, internal works and the erection of the fence do not in themselves require planning approval – internal works not constituting development, and the fence being permitted development.

Whilst the fence is not the most attractive of features and does currently give the site something of an industrial appearance, this can be improved through painting it a more attractive colour and screening it through new landscape planting. This has already been put forward by the applicant but can also be a condition of planning approval. This would improve the site's appearance when viewed from the street. The erection of the fence along the rear boundary does raise some concern in relation to the visual impact upon the open countryside to the rear. However, as it is permitted development there is little that the LPA can control in this regard, albeit the applicant can be encouraged to include new native hedgerow planting to this rear boundary, which will visually improve the development's appearance, as well as provide some biodiversity enhancement.

The other noticeable feature are three shipping containers which have been placed in the fenced area. These are for general storage of materials and being positioned towards the rear of the site will not have any significant impact upon the visual amenity of the locality.

Whilst visually the palisade fence is not ideal, it does not require planning approval and is needed for securing the site. Overall, that proposed is generally considered to be acceptable in these regards and complies with the requirements of Policy DM1 and the Council's 'Quality Places' Supplementary Planning Document.

Highways, Access & Parking:

The access in and out of the site from the highway is unchanged, and the historical pub use has demonstrated the vehicle access and egress is suitable for not only cars, but also for larger vehicles such as those undertaking deliveries and refuse collections. Albeit it is not expected that large vehicles will need to regularly visit the site, as most materials are delivered directly to the construction sites the company is working on at the time. It is not intended that large quantities of materials will be kept at the application site.

The parking layout is acceptable and should be ample for the scale of the proposed office use. However, it has been requested in the highways response that external storage is kept in designated areas so that it does not result in overspill parking onto the highway.

In terms of trips to and from the site, it would not be anticipated that there would be a material change, certainly not one that would be anticipated to cause a severe highway impact. At its peak, the former pub may well have generated trip rates in excess of those anticipated from the proposed use.

Overall therefore, that proposed is unlikely to cause any adverse highway issues and accords with Policies DM1, DM13 and DM14 of the adopted Local Plan.

Amenity & Noise:

In terms of the amenity of neighbouring residential properties, some concern has been raised that the proposals will be like a builder's merchants. This is not correct. The site will predominantly be used as offices, with some ancillary material and equipment storage within the building and the containers currently on site. It is not expected that any further containers or external storage will be required, and this can be controlled via a suitably worded planning condition. As such, the level and nature of external movements will not be like that of a builder's merchants and should not therefore result in any undue noise or disturbance to neighbouring residential properties.

It should also be noted that when the pub was open, it would have operated at different hours to that of normal office hours, i.e. into the evenings, which would have included use of the beer garden. The proposed office use of the site will generally be during daytime hours and of a nature which is unlikely to cause the same level of noise and disturbance as would have been the case were the pub still in operation.

In terms of loss of privacy, light or outlook, there are no concerns given that the external form and scale of the building will not be altered.

Overall therefore, it is not considered that the proposed office use, and those ancillary uses associated with it will result in any undue or unacceptable disturbance upon the amenity of neighbouring properties or the wider area. As such, the application is considered to accord with Policy DM1 and the Council's 'Quality Places' SPD, albeit a condition controlling use of the external enclosed space is recommended.

Trees & Ecology:

The most significant trees on site are those which mark the rear north-east boundary with the fields behind. It is not proposed to undertake any works to these trees and it is not expected that the proposed new site use will have any impact upon them.

Notwithstanding, a condition is recommended which prevents any construction, storage of materials or equipment, and parking of vehicles within a 'construction exclusion zone' which is marked on the submitted site layout drawings. This should ensure that the trees are not harmed during building works. In addition it is recommended that no storage or parking should take place in the former beer garden once works are complete.

In terms of ecology, externally the site will be left relatively unaltered compared to its former pub use, so is not expected to result in any impact upon local biodiversity habitat. Notwithstanding, there is scope to provide improvements through new landscaping and tree planting, as well as that already proposed and shown on the proposed site layout drawing and set out in the supporting planning statement. This can be included in a suitable condition.

Area Character:

Whilst the concerns regarding the loss of The Roll Call as a pub are noted, it has been closed for approaching two and a half years, with no viable interest in reopening it as a drinking establishment. Indeed, the local authority have had a number of informal enquiries regarding complete redevelopment of the site for housing, which would have resulted in demolition of the building. Although that proposed still results on the loss of the pub use, it does retain the building and brings it back into a viable long-term use, which will provide continued employment for local residents by a local company. The site will therefore again assist in supporting the local economy, which is a requirement of the NPPF.

In terms of the actual proposed use, being predominantly for office purposes, it is not expected that there would be any undue adverse impact upon the amenity or general character of the locality. As such, that proposed is considered to accord with Policy DM1 and the Council's 'Quality Places' SPD.

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, 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.

The NPPF aims for the need for housing to be met, and policy S2 of the Local Plan sets a target for 14,580 dwellings to be provided by 2036. The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Local Plan and energy and water elements of the adopted Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD require development to be sustainable in terms of resource use, climate change and energy use. 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 for change of use is recommended for approval subject to conditions relating to the following:

- Approved drawings;
- Commencement within 3 years;
- No burning;
- Provision of a detailed landscaping scheme, including biodiversity enhancement features prior to the building being brought into office use;
- Implementation of the approved landscaping scheme and biodiversity enhancement measures;
- Painting of the section of palisade fencing visible from the street (i.e. south-western side) prior to the site being brought into office use;
- No storage of materials, equipment or parking of vehicles within the identified construction exclusion zone during building works;
- No storage of materials, equipment or parking of vehicles within the former beer garden once the office use commences; and
- Removal of permitted development rights for provision of hardstanding.