

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT:**Application Ref:** F/24/98611**Site Address:** 78 CHALK HILL, WEST END, SOUTHAMPTON, SO18 3DB**Case Officer:** Clare Martin**Description:** Conversion of meeting room into 1no. four bed dwelling

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Within urban edge • Existing community facility • Blanket TPO covers whole site • Within Solent mitigation and disturbance zone • Within New Forest mitigation and disturbance zone		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Z/16829/010 – Construction of meeting room with car parking, new access and felling of trees – Permitted (April 1996) • Z/16829/009 - Outline Renewal of permission for house and garage – Permitted (Nov 1993) • Z/16829/008 - Outline: Construction of two dwellings – Refused (Apr 1991) • Z/16829/007 - Outline: Construction of dwelling – Permitted (Oct 1990) • Z/16829/006 – Erection of three dwellings – Refused (Nov 1989) • Z/16829/005 – Renewal Outline: Erection of dwelling – Permitted (Dec 1987) • Z/16829/004 – Outline: Erection of a house and garage – Permitted (Oct 1984) • Z/16829/003 – Erection of three dwellings – Refused (Mar 1982) and dismissed on appeal. • Z/16829/002 – Erection of dwelling with garage – Permitted (Jun 1981) • Z/16829/001- Outline application for five dwellings – Refused (Feb 1980)		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☐	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	<u>1 letter of objection (7 Beechwood Rise)</u> • Trades people parking on busy road during construction period. • Lack of visibility at access due to gradient.		
Ecology:	<u>No Objection</u> – subject to conditions I have reviewed the Ecological Impact Assessment by LC Ecological Services (February 2025). <u>Protected Species</u>		

	The building was assessed to have moderate potential for roosting bats, low potential for foraging and commuting bats and nesting opportunities for house sparrows and swifts. The woodland and hedgerows must be protected from accidental damage during building works. No work is proposed to be carried out on the roof or within the roof void and the internal works are assessed as unlikely to impact on roosting bats. A precautionary working method to protect bats and nesting birds is required and bat informative. A CEMP/ Construction Method Statement has been included on the Proposed Work Compound plan and includes all required information. The consultation response provides advice on: • Removing any vegetation outside of bird nesting season (March to August) and advice if active nests are found. • On-going habitat management such as hedge trimming must be timed to take place between September and early February to avoid harming or destroying active birds' nests. • If external lighting is required, the guidelines in section 7.14 must be followed. <u>Biodiversity Net Gain</u> The biodiversity enhancements listed in section 8.1 are appropriate. This will include: • a bat box and a bird nest box installed on mature trees and a swift nest box (north elevation) and bat box (south elevation) added to the house • Hedgerows will be enhanced or replaced with native species. The small flower silverberry is particularly attractive to pollinators and birds so should be retained. • Flower beds will be installed in the car park and on bare ground adjacent to the southern boundary to provide habitat for a variety of invertebrates. • A stag beetle loggery will be built in the woodland as directed in section 8.3. • Removal of Wilson's honeysuckle has been recommended to allow native species to proliferate in the woodland understorey and recommend removal of the pendulous sedge.
Trees:	<u>No objection</u> - subject to arboricultural method statement and a tree protection plan condition
Parish Council:	No response

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: Carried out 15/1/25		

Pre-commencement Conditions:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Email received from agent agreeing pre-commencements for tree condition and ecology.		

Legislation:
Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:-

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

Policy:

**National Planning Policy Framework
Planning Practice Guidance**

Development Plan:

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1 (sustainable development), S2 (approach to development), S3 (location of new housing); Development Management Policies DM1 (general development), DM3 (climate change), DM10 (water and waste water), DM11 (nature conservation), DM13 (access), DM14 (parking), DM23 (residential development within urban areas), DM29 (dwellings with higher access standards), DM30 (internal space standards) & DM36 (community facilities)

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards & Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:

Principle

The site is within the urban edge where the principle of development is usually acceptable, subject to the detailed matters according with the relevant planning policies. However, in this case the proposed residential conversion would lead to the loss of a community facility and therefore is not permitted under Policy DM36 unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) alternative provision is made which is more appropriate to the needs of the community, or is more accessible; or
- b) the existing facility can be shown to be surplus to local needs.

The site was operating as a meeting hall for the Itchen Gospel Hall Trust but closed in 2020, due to falling numbers as members moved outside of the area. The meeting hall is no longer needed by the group who have five other meeting rooms within Eastleigh Borough. They have also received permission for a new meeting room to be opened in Romsey (23/005558/FULLS).

The site has remained vacant for the last four years during which time it has been marketed through an estate agent but has received no interest from other community uses. The building itself is relatively small consisting of a single meeting room, which is lacking in both internal space, facilities and car parking and therefore is less appealing than other existing community facilities.

The surrounding area has other halls for hire (such as west end parish centre, the hilldene centre, moorlands community centre & town hill farm community centre) and is reasonably well served by churches, libraries, scout huts, gyms, nurseries and other community facilities.

Due to the length of time on the market, limited facilities at the site and availability of nearby community uses it is reasonable to conclude that the existing building is surplus to requirements and an alternative community use is unlikely to be found. As such the proposed change of use meets the requirements of Policy DM36.

Character and Appearance

Policy DM1 requires development to take full and proper account of the context of the site including the character, appearance and land uses of the locality, and be well integrated with these (in terms of mass, scale, materials, layout, density, design and siting), both in itself and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views.

No extensions are required to convert the building into a residential use and by clearing out the lower storage area the proposal will make a more efficient use of the existing site. The building's tired exterior will be smarted up with the use of white render, metal grey cladding, grey windows and an open sided porch added to mark its entrance. The proposal is considered to improve the appearance of the building, which will fit in with the mixture of residential properties along Chalk Hill.

Residential Amenity

Policy DM1 also requires that new development should not have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenities of existing residents.

The residential conversion has its main living room and bedroom windows at the front and rear of the building where they do not directly overlook neighbouring properties. The proposal will also introduce secondary windows on the side elevations for the ensembles, but these are high level and obscure glazed and so not result in material overlooking.

The development accords with guidance set out in the 'Quality Places' SPD in that there will be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties in terms of loss of privacy, light or outlook.

Living Conditions

Policies DM1 & DM30 requires all new dwellings to provide a good living environment for their future residents and to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards. In terms of external amenity space, Quality Places SPD requires all new residential developments to provide an outdoor amenity space of at least 60% of the dwellings floor space.

The converted dwelling has a gross internal floor space of 126m², which meets the nationally described space standards for a four bed, two storey, dwelling. There is also large area to the rear and this will be used as an outdoor amenity space for the dwelling.

There are lots of protected trees within the rear garden, which will reduce some of the natural daylight entering the garden and internal rooms. However, the converted property benefits from new patio doors and large windows serving the main ground floor living areas and upstairs bedroom. As such the dwelling should receive adequate daylight and the trees will provide a pleasant outlook.

Highways and Car Parking

Policy DM13 requires that all new development has a safe and convenient access to the highway network, with Policy DM14 requiring three on site car parking spaces to be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted standards.

The large car parking area is to be retained at the front of the site, which provides ample parking for the four bedroomed property. While the objector's concerns regarding the site access is noted, the use of the dwelling is likely to generate less vehicular trips than the previous community use and therefore should have less of an impact on highway safety. The proposal also includes bin and cycle storage at the side of the building.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy DM11 states that development will not be permitted if it is likely to have a direct or indirect adverse effect on priority habitats, protected or priority species, or on the local ecological network unless it can be demonstrated that a) there are no alternative solutions, b) the adverse impact are unavoidable, c) measures are taken to mitigate or compensate for the adverse effects. d) there is an overall biodiversity net gain.

An ecological impact assessment has been provided, which outlines measures to ensure that the proposed conversion does not have a detrimental impact on protected or notable species. A construction plan has been provided and a precautionary working method condition will be imposed to protect bats and nesting birds.

The proposal also provides significant biodiversity enhancements, including bat and bird boxes and extensive areas of new planting within the site, including new hedged boundaries. On this basis no objection has been raised by the Ecology Officer.

Trees

Policy DM1 requires development not to result in the loss or damage of important trees. Further guidance on this issue is provided within the Council's Trees and Development SPD.

There are some significant trees around the site, including to the front, adjacent to the highway. In addition, what will become the rear garden is currently woodland-like, and contains a lot of trees and understorey. The entire site is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

No arboricultural information has been submitted. However, the most significant trees (e.g. the ones to the front) will not require removing to facilitate the development and should not be adversely affected by the development. The main concern is the creation of the rear garden, which will have to involve the removal of some understorey (e.g. hazels) and creation of amenity space (turfing, planting, etc.). To ensure that this work does not impact the trees, a pre-commencement condition will need to be imposed securing an arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan.

Impact of SPA:

Recreational Disturbance

The site is within both the 5.6km catchment area for the Solent Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site and the 13.8km catchment area for the New Forest Special Protection Area. It is recognised that new housing developments within these catchment areas are likely to result in additional visitors to the protected sites. To mitigate this impact the developer has paid a contribution towards the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (which manages visitors to the coastline) and the Council's New Forest Mitigation Strategy (which provides Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces within the borough and funds a ranger post within the New Forest).

Nutrients

The site is within the impact zone for nitrogen and phosphorus, which has been shown to have a determinantal impact on the water quality of the Southampton and Solent Water Special Protection Area. A nutrient budget has been submitted for the development, which shows a positive output for nitrogen. The Applicant intends to use the Eastleigh Borough Council scheme to mitigate for the increased nutrients from the development and this mitigation will be secured by a pre- occupation condition.

An appropriate assessment under the habitat regulations has been completed for the development and Natural England have confirmed that the Council's nitrogen mitigation is acceptable, but have concerns with the phosphorus mitigation scheme.

Natural England are comfortable with the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy but have objected to the Council's New Forest Mitigation Strategy as it is not considered precautionary enough. However, the Local Planning Authority, as competent authority, is content that all the mitigation strategies are acceptable and delivers the appropriate levels of mitigation. The formal twenty-one-day notification of permission has been given to Natural England and this has now expired.

Equalities Act:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty.

Section 149 (1) 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.

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 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 plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the 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 Adopted Local Plan sets a target for 14,580 dwellings to be provided by 2036. The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Adopted 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.

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

Comments ...