

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT:**Application Ref:** F/25/98967**Site Address:** STROUDWOOD NURSERY, STROUDWOOD LANE, LOWER UPHA**Case Officer:** Clare Martin**Description:** Erection of 1no. industrial storage building and associated yard (Use Class B8), following demolition of existing barn

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Outside Urban Edge – Countryside		

Planning History?	Yes ☐	No ☐
- PN/24/98380 - Prior Notification Application Under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R for a Change of Use of a Former Agricultural Building to a Flexible Use within Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) – Consented (November 2024) - PD/24/98242 - A permitted development enquiry confirmed that under Class R up to 150m2 of the barn could be used as an office without requiring either a planning application or prior notification application.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	None		
Ecology Officer:	<u>Biodiversity Net Gain – Comments</u> The statutory BNG metric shows that at least 10% biodiversity net gain can be achieved on site with a post development increase in area habitats of 11.48% and an increase in hedgerow (linear) habitats of 38.34. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been updated, and this has satisfactorily addressed the previous concerns. <u>Species - Comments</u> The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal states that there is low potential for foraging and commuting badgers, low potential for reptiles in the tall ruderal and bramble habitats, potential for dormice in the retained habitats and low potential for nesting birds. Section 5.6 of the Planning Design and Access Statement by Nova Planning (February 2025) states: The existing vegetation on the southern boundary, comprising a hedgerow and mature trees, will be retained and protected as part of the proposed development. The roadside hedge along the western boundary will also be preserved and enhanced with additional native planting. Further native planting will be introduced around the site perimeter to better integrate the development into the landscape, provide visual containment, and achieve measurable net gains in biodiversity. Precautionary working methods for protected species have been included in section 6.0 of the PEA report. These are appropriate and must be adhered to during construction. This includes: - directional strimming and passive dispersal during the active reptile period (April through September),		

	- an updated walkover for nesting birds, a pre-works check for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist if work cannot avoid the bird nesting season March/August). - As the active reptile period overlaps with most of the bird nesting season, it is highly likely that the pre-works check will be required, so this must be conditioned. The location of the recommended bat and bird nest boxes must be shown on a plan. The plan will include the specifications of the boxes, the specifications of any exterior lighting and the directional aspect of the proposed elevations to ensure that these enhancements are in appropriate locations. Given the rural nature of this site, a biodiverse green roof would be an additional enhancement, help the building to blend in with its surroundings and make a very positive contribution to the area. <u>Sustainable Drainage – Comments</u> The Drainage Strategy by Aqua Callidus Consulting (March 2025) contains permeability test results which show that infiltration is not possible on this site. The proposal is to have porous gravel pavement for the storage yard with a coarse graded aggregate (CGA) foundation. The Drainage plan also shows a system of ACO channels draining the parking area, and notes that include catch pit with Smart sponge to outfall, two diffusers, exfiltration, a Control flow 300 chamber and a GRC (Glass Reinforced Cement?) outfall. These have not been explained sufficiently in the Drainage Strategy but it looks as if all of the surface water drainage is filtered by the aggregate under the porous gravel pavement and discharged into a ditch to the west of the site at a rate of 2l/s which is acceptable. The simple index approach has been used to demonstrate that potential pollutants from the roof and the car park have been mitigated. The report includes a standard SuDS maintenance table and diagrams of most of the proposed features, although information is required about the Smart Sponge and its maintenance requirements.
Highways Officer (HCC):	<u>Comments</u> <u>Access – 17/3/25</u> It is proposed that the existing site access will be updated in line with that approved under application PN/24/98380, inclusive of elements such as the site gate being set back a suitable distance into the site to allow for a vehicle to pull off the highway in order to open the gate without obstructing other road users. However, there does not appear to be a commitment to ensure that vehicles arrive and depart from the south only (B3037 Mortimers Lane) only in order to avoid the largely restrictive bends and road narrowing's that occur to the north. Such a commitment would be required via a formal access management condition. <u>Trip Rates – 10/4/25</u> Assuming that the trip rates associated with application PN/24/98380 are to remain, given the information as outlined below, being 'the yard associated with the proposed commercial unit will not generate independent trips because it is ancillary to the main unit, serving solely

	as a functional extension of the business rather than a standalone operation', then the access tracking as shown on the attached would be acceptable in this specific case. Whilst tight, there is good visibility on the lane looking south from the height of an HGV, and given the level and direction of flows it would be anticipated that on the rare occasion that an HGV may be entering site at the same time as one may be existing (and vis-versa), a hold on site can be accommodated to allow for an internal pass. <table><tr><th></th><th>AM Peak (0800 – 0900)</th><th>PM Peak (1600 – 1700)</th><th>Daily (12 Hour)</th></tr><tr><td>Arrivals</td><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>23</td></tr><tr><td>Departures</td><td>0</td><td>6</td><td>23</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>46</td></tr></table> <i>Anticipated Trip Rates outlined in application PN/24/98380</i> Any rise in trip rates could however necessitate access junction improvements which allowed for two-way vehicle movement accordingly.		AM Peak (0800 – 0900)	PM Peak (1600 – 1700)	Daily (12 Hour)	Arrivals	7	1	23	Departures	0	6	23	Total	7	7	46
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Parish Council:	<u>Comments</u> The Parish Council express concern on the unsuitability of this area for industrial/warehousing, particularly the possibility of an increase in larger traffic on this single track lane. Therefore, we ask that if the officer is of a mind to permit then restrictions on its use and hours be implemented.																

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: April 2025		

Pre-commencement Conditions:	Yes ☐	No ☒
Details:		

Legislation:
Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:- <i>"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."</i>

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are: <u>Strategic policies:</u> S1 (sustainable development) S2 (approach to development), S4(employment floor space) & S5 (new development in the countryside). <u>Development management policies</u> DM1 (general criteria for new development), DM6 (sustainable drainage), DM11(nature conservation), DM13(general development criteria – transport) and DM18(extension/ replacement of non residential buildings in the countryside).

Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places, Biodiversity, Trees and Development

Planning History and Proposal:

The site has received prior notification approval (under Class R) to allow the existing agricultural barn to be used for storage and distribution purposes (Class B8). The current proposal is for full planning permission to replace the existing barn with a purpose built warehouse on the same footprint. The proposal also includes the creation of an outdoor storage yard, car park and associated works.

Assessment:

Principle of Development

The site is located within an area of countryside where Policy S5 sets out the specific types of rural uses that are acceptable in such locations. Policy S5 makes provision for the replacement of a lawful, non-residential, permanent buildings in the countryside. As such the principle of the development is considered acceptable, providing the details of the scheme accords with the relevant planning policies.

Character, Appearance and Impact on the Countryside

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.

Policy DM18 is particularly relevant as it covers the replacement of non-residential buildings in the countryside. The policy stipulates that the replacement building must not have an urbanising effect on the countryside (in terms of its density, scale, massing, layout, height) and the associated access, car parking, landscaping and services be provided without having a detrimental impact on the character of the countryside.

The site is located along Stroudwood Lane, which is a narrow, single lane, road boarded by tree lined fields and hedgerows. The lane has a rural character with small pockets of buildings mostly within agricultural, horticultural, equestrian or residential uses.

The site contains a 400m² barn, which sits close to the road behind a tree belt on its southern side and shrubs along its main boundaries. The haybarn is of an open sided, steel framed, construction with a low pitched roof and it sits unobtrusively within the rural landscape. The external area to the front and northern side of the barn is mostly bare ground and is informally used for small amounts of agricultural storage and by farm vehicles collecting hay or accessing the rear fields.

The principle of using the existing barn for storage and distribution purposes (Class B8) has already been accepted under the prior notification application (which considered the transport and highways, commercial noise, contamination and flood risk aspects of reusing the existing building). A new planning application would be required to secure any external alterations to the building, and these would be expected to be fairly minimal enabling the building to be used for storage purposes while maintaining as much as possible of the existing structure and respecting the rural character of the locality.

The proposal would replace the existing barn with a purpose-built warehouse on the same footprint as the current structure. However, while the building is the same height as the existing barn, its eaves height has been increased from 3m to 5m thus making it larger, bulkier and more imposing than the existing open sided barn. The replacement building is also fully clad and includes large roller shutters doors on the front and a glazed

entrance feature wrapping around the corner. The scale, design and materials of the building is considered to be out of keeping with the rural character of Stroudwood Lane and is typical of buildings found within industrial estates

Furthermore, the replacement building would be clearly visible from the Stroudwood Lane, most notably when traveling southwards where the boundary shrubs are lower, but also northbound during the winter months. Due to the design and size of the proposed replacement building, in such a visible location, the proposal would have an urbanising impact upon the Stroudwood Lane.

The proposal also introduces a car park and external storage yard to the site, which goes further than the prior notification application that considered solely the re-use of the existing barn. While it would not be unreasonable to expect a modest car park for the building, its size (at 441m²) is larger than the floor space of the replacement building and would be surfaced in tarmac rather than more natural materials expected within a rural area. The size and appearance of the car park, along with the proposed entrance gates and securing fencing, would further enforce the sites industrial appearance.

However, the most significant change to the setting of the building is the introduction of a new 994m² outdoor storage yard at the northern side of the building. The yard is roughly two and a half times the footprint of the building and could be used to store a wide variety of products, materials, vehicles or equipment depending on the occupier of the unit. Items stored or stacked within the yard would be highly visible from Stroudwood Lane, especially as the low boundary vegetation would be trimmed back. The proposed external storage use would have a strong detrimental and urbanising impact on the prevailing rural character of the locality.

In conclusion, the replacement building, car park, outdoor storage yard and associated structures would create an incongruous and urbanising development, which industrial appearance would be out of keeping with the rural environment and would be harmful to the character of the countryside location. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies DM1 and DM18.

Access and Highways

Policy DM18 requires as far as possible for the replacement building to be sustainability located, in terms of accessibility, by means of transport other than the private car. Policy DM13 requires that all new development has a safe and convenient access to the highway network and does not create a danger to road users or have a significant detrimental impact upon the operation or safety of the highways network.

The site is located along Stroudwood Lane, which is outside of the main settlements and is not easily accessible by public transport or cycling. As such employees and visitors to the business would have to rely on private car and the proposed distribution and storage use would involve additional vehicle movements, including HGV's, along Stroudwood Lane.

However, the re-use of the existing agricultural barn for storage and distribution purposes (under Class B8) has already been accepted as part of the earlier prior notification application, partly due to trip rates connected to other permitted uses such as for offices. Access details and trip rates were considered by the Highway Authority and no objection raised (on the proviso that articulated vehicles accessed the site from a southerly direction to avoid the largely restrictive bends and road narrowing's that occur to the north).

The current proposal goes beyond the previous permission as it would also introduce a 994m² outdoor storage area, which could result in an uplift in vehicle movements along Stroudwood Lane. However, the agent argues that the storage area would be ancillary to the main unit, serving solely as a functional extension of the business rather than a standalone operation and could be conditioned as such. Its use would be limited to storage, loading, or other activities directly related to the primary commercial function,

meaning all trips to and from the site would be generated by the main unit's operations rather than the yard itself. This viewpoint has been accepted by the Highway Authority.

In their response, the Highway Authority notes that there is good visibility at the site access and it would be anticipated that on the rare occasion that two HGV's meet a hold on site can be accommodated to allow for an internal pass. No objection has been raised by the Highway Authority (subject to conditions) and the proposal is not considered to have a material impact upon the road network.

Ecology

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. The National Planning Policy Framework requires all new dwellings to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain.

The siting of the proposal is not considered to have a direct impact upon trees or other natural features worthy of retention or a likely significant impact upon the special protection area.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been submitted, which notes that there is a low potential for foraging and commuting badgers, low potential for reptiles in the tall ruderal and bramble habitats, potential for dormice in the retained habitats and low potential for nesting birds. The report goes on to suggest mitigation and enhancement methods so that the development does not adversely affect species.

While the proposal involves cutting back some of the shrubs at the site, further ecology information has been provided by the agent to show how the 10% biodiversity net gain would be achieved at the site.

The ecology and biodiversity net gain information has been reviewed by the Ecology Officer and no objection raised (subject to conditions).

Drainage

Policies DM3 and DM6 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) stipulate that new development must provide sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) wherever feasible. The Drainage Strategy by Aqua Callidus Consulting (March 2025), which includes controlling and treating surface water runoff before releasing it into a ditch at the roadside. The drainage strategy has been reviewed and accepted by Ecology officer (subject to condition regarding its maintenance).

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 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 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.

Planning Balance and Recommendation		
Recommendation:	PERMIT ☐	REFUSE ☒
It is acknowledged that the proposed storage and distribution building and yard would employ around five people. However, the small number of jobs created would have a negligible impact upon the local economy and would be strongly outweighed by the significant detrimental impact the new development would have on the character and appearance of the rural area. As such the proposal is recommended for refusal.		