

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/24/98599

Site Address: RIDGE FARM, GRANGE ROAD, BURSLEDON, SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 8GD

Case Officer: Gary Osmond

Description: Retrospective application for erection of vehicle storage building and workshop unit (B2) in place of previously erected structures

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Outside the urban edge - Within Settlement Gap		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
F/24/98592 - Change of use of former agricultural land to hardstanding ancillary to existing commercial premises (Retrospective Application) - TBD		
Z/27915/004/00 – Construction of barn – Approved Nov 1997		
Z/27915/003/00 – Erection of barn adjacent to existing stables – Refused Jul 1997		
Z/27915/002/00 – Erection of agricultural workers dwelling – Approved May 1987		
Z/27915/001/00 – Outline: Erection of agricultural workers dwelling – Allowed at Appeal Dec 1986		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	No written representations received.		
Hound Parish Council:	Object. Members discussed this application at last night's PC meeting and voted to Object on expanding the commercial environment in a strategic gap with limited access in what was originally a residential area.		

Site Visit:	Yes ☐	No ☒
The site and surrounding area is known to the case officer and images have been provided within the application supporting information, as well as being clearly visible via Google Earth aerial images.		

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, DM8, DM11, DM13, DM14 and DM18.
Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places

Assessment:
Site Context: Ridge Farm whilst once an agricultural smallholding, is now made up of a series of small generally single storey industrial workshop and storage buildings. These are occupied by various small businesses generally in Class E(g)(iii) or B2 uses. It is unclear if any have formal planning consent for these uses but it is very likely that they have been in place long enough to be exempt from any planning enforcement action.

The application site lies within the overall Ridge Farm and is accessed through the main gate via a private road/track which leads to Grange Road to the west of the site. the track also serves a number of other similar former small holdings as well as a number of residential dwellings and caravans.

The surrounding land is made up of neighbouring commercial sites to the east and west, and agricultural fields to the north and south. Land in the locality is generally flat and is characterised by open fields surrounded by hedged field boundaries, areas of woodland, and individual dwellings. The more built up area of Bursledon lies to the east, Netley Abbey to the south, and Southampton city to the west.

Proposals:

The application seeks consent for the retention of two buildings which were erected approximately three years ago. The larger of the two is a modest workshop building, approximately 120 sqm in area with a small first floor mezzanine of 24 sqm; the other being a single storey storage shed/garage for the applicant's tractor and other equipment used to maintain the land of around 50 sqm. Both of these buildings replaced original structures which were dismantled.

Policy & Principle:

The application site lies outside the urban edge where the principle of development is not usually considered acceptable except for a number of specific uses set out in Policy S5 of the adopted Local Plan. One such use is the provision of employment through the extension and replacement of existing employment uses, as set out by Policy DM18 which allows for the extension or replacement of non-residential buildings in the countryside provided a number of criteria are met. These include: the building to be extended or replaced must have a lawful use and not subject to a temporary permission; that the resulting building must not have an urbanising effect on the countryside in terms of its density, scale, massing, layout and height; have suitable access; be sustainably located where possible; replacement buildings include demolition of the original; and that buildings must be within the curtilage of the original.

The site also lies within the Bursledon, Netley and Southampton Settlement Gap, which is covered by Policy S6 of the Local Plan. This states that development within a settlement gap will only be permitted if it would not undermine the physical extent and/or visual separation of settlements; and it would not have an urbanising effect detrimental to the character of the countryside or separate identities of adjoining settlements.

Also of relevance is Policy DM1 which requires all new development to take appropriate account of the site context and that of the surrounding area, to be of a good standard of design, and ensure minimal impact upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and uses or ensure appropriate mitigation is secured. The policy also covers issues of access, servicing and landscaping.

In principle therefore the demolition and replacement of the original buildings is acceptable. However, planning permission will be dependent upon whether the impact of that applied for meets the requirements of the relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan.

Retrospective Application:

Whilst not encouraged, a retrospective planning application must be considered on planning grounds and cannot be used as a reason to refuse an application or weigh against it.

Form, Scale, Appearance & Impact on Character of the Area:

The form and general scale of the garage and workshop buildings are roughly similar to the original buildings which they replaced, albeit the workshop is slightly larger in footprint. In terms of their appearance, they are simple corrugated steel buildings finished in a dark green with grey roofs. These match similar newer buildings elsewhere within Ridge Farm.

Each building is located fairly centrally within the wider Ridge Farm complex, which includes a number of other buildings and structures which surround both new buildings. Each is viewed as part of the bigger complex and individually have no unacceptable impact upon the wider character or appearance of the countryside and settlement gap. It is also the case that both are of a very similar size to the structures they replaced. As such, any greater impact is minimal.

Overall, the two buildings are considered to generally accord with the requirements of Policies S6, DM1 and DM18 of the adopted Local Plan.

Amenity:

Whilst no formal written representations have been received, it is known that a number of neighbouring residents have expressed concerns at the increase in activities on the Ridge Farm site. These concerns are noted. However, they are better investigated and dealt with by other means, as there is no clear indication that it is the activities associated with the two replacement buildings which is resulting in additional disturbance to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.

The two buildings being considered are located away from the nearest residential properties with other structures between the two. As such they have not resulted in any loss of privacy, light or outlook and accord with the amenity requirements of Policy DM1 and the Council's 'Quality Places' Supplementary Planning Document.

Restrictions on the use of the two buildings has been considered but not considered necessary in this instance. Their modest size and location effectively limit and control what activities they can accommodate, which in turn should ensure the likelihood of the buildings' use adversely impacting the amenity of the locality is minimal.

Ecology:

It is unclear what if any biodiversity value the original buildings would have had. Notwithstanding, their removal did not in itself require planning approval and given the nature of the site, it is not expected that there is currently much in the way of biodiversity habitat. Policy DM11 requires all development to result in a net-gain. As such, it is recommended that a bird/bat box is installed on each building.

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

- Approved drawings
- Bird/bat boxes to be installed