

## DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

**Application Ref:** F/24/98592

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

**Case Officer:** Gary Osmond

**Description:** Change of use of former agricultural land to hardstanding ancillary to existing commercial premises (Retrospective Application)

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| <b>Particular Site Constraints?</b>                                                                      | <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Outside the urban edge</li><li>- Within Settlement Gap</li></ul> |                                     |                                    |

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| <b>Planning History?</b>                                                                                                                                          | <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F/24/98592 - Change of use of former agricultural land to hardstanding ancillary to existing commercial premises (Retrospective Application) – Approved June 2025 |                                     |                                    |
| 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                                                                  |                                     |                                    |

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|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Publicity:</b>     | <b>Letters</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Site Notice</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Newspaper</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 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. |                                                        |                                           |

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| <b>Site Visit:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A site visit was conducted on 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2025, but no photographs were taken. Notwithstanding, 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. |                                     |                                    |

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| <b>Policy:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>National Planning Policy Framework</b><br><b>Planning Practice Guidance</b>                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Development Plan:</b><br>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. |
| <b>Supplementary Planning Documents:</b><br>Quality Places                                                                                                                                                                       |

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| <b>Assessment:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Site Context:</b><br>Ridge Farm whilst once an agricultural smallholding, is now made up of a series of small 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 an area of gravel hardstanding used for vehicle parking and boat storage located just to the north of the main structures on site, with further undeveloped land to the north which is currently grass. The area is used by a number of existing businesses within the main part of the site.

**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. Notwithstanding these policy requirements, DM18 makes no reference to 'non-building' development such as areas of hardstanding for parking or storage.

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 that proposed is neither supported nor considered unacceptable. As such, 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, in particular its impact upon the settlement gap.

**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.

**Layout, Scale, Appearance & Impact on Character of the Area:**

The area of hardstanding is roughly rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 62 metres wide by 42 metre deep, equating to around 2,600 square metres in area. It lies to

the north of the built-up area at the southern end of the Ridge Farm site which is defined by an informal building line approximately a third of the way into the site. The gravel hardstanding itself is at the same level as the remainder of the site, which gently rises to the north and is laid to grass.

In terms of its appearance, the hardstanding is obviously visible when inside the site but externally is shielded from the access lane or any other public vantage points by buildings or boundary hedges. Notwithstanding, some of the larger boats which are stored on it are sometimes visible above the hedgerows, vehicles parked on the hardstanding are not, so have minimal visual impact upon the immediate surrounding area.

Views of the site in general from the wider surrounding area are relatively limited due to trees and dense hedgerows along road verges, including the access lane to Ridge Farm and neighbouring properties. There are a couple of public rights of way nearby; one to the east through woodland with very limited views of the farmland to its west; and a second which runs diagonally through the field to the south of the access lane. Whilst this second footpath is closer, views of Ridge Farm and neighbouring development along the lane are generally shielded by hedgerow planting, with the hardstanding set behind buildings out of sight.

In terms of the visual amenity and character of the locality therefore, it would be difficult to argue that the hardstanding and activities upon it have had any adverse or unacceptable impact. Equally, given the scale of other activities on the Ridge Farm site and immediate neighbouring sites, the hardstanding is ancillary to these activities and does not in itself have any significant impact upon the character of the wider locality or the settlement gap.

Whilst not necessarily something that would usually be encouraged, the area of hardstanding is not considered to cause any unacceptable or adverse harm, certainly not to the extent that a refusal of the application could easily be justified. As such, it generally accords 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 directly with the gravel hardstanding which is resulting in additional disturbance to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.

The hardstanding is immediately adjacent to a number of residential caravans which are on the neighbouring site to the east, although the area closest to these properties is generally used for boat trailer storage rather than parking. As such, disturbance is very limited. Notwithstanding, the situation could be improved by reinforcing the existing boundary hedge between the two sites, which would greatly improve privacy and outlook. This can be conditioned and could also assist in achieving some biodiversity net gain.

Restrictions on the use of the hardstanding has been considered and given the close proximity to these residential caravans, is considered reasonable. As such, it is recommended that a condition is imposed restricting the eastern half of the hardstanding – closest to the caravans – can only be used for boat trailer storage, with the western half used for parking ancillary to existing uses within Ridge Farm. This will ensure that no greater level of disturbance results in the future. With such a restriction, the development will accord with the requirements of Policy DM1.

#### **Ecology:**

Given the development has altered more than 25 square metres of original habitat, there is a requirement for application to demonstrate that a 10% biodiversity net gain can be achieved. As such, the application is supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment which demonstrates that the current development has resulted in a net loss of – 0.47 habitat units (- 13.74%) and – 0.08 linear units (non-native ornamental hedgerow) (-

20.55%) and could achieve a net gain of + 0.37 habitat units (10.72%) and + 0.05 linear units (+ 13.21%) with the trading rules being satisfied.

The assessment also puts forward proposals for net gain enhancements including enhancing 0.2 ha of modified grassland on site to other neutral grassland in moderate condition and creating 0.07 km of native hedgerow. This would deliver 1.24 area habitat units and 0.14 linear habitat units. The report also recommends native planting to provide resources for pollinating insects, habitat for nesting birds, foraging bats, amphibians and reptiles. A Biodiversity Net Gain Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required, with significant habitats to be managed and monitored for 30 years. This can be conditioned rather than secured by S106.

Provided these works are undertaken, the development will accord with the requirements of the net gain legislation as well as Policy DM11 of the Local Plan.

### **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** ☐

Whilst not necessarily a form of development which would usually be encouraged, the hardstanding has had a limited impact upon the character and visual amenity of the locality. As such, it is considered to meet the main requirements of Policies S5, S6, DM1 and DM18 of the adopted Local Plan for the reasons set out above and is recommended for approval subject to conditions.