

Application Number: F/22/92889
Case Officer: Clare Martin
Received Date: Thursday 14 April 2022
Site Address: ITCHEN VALLEY COUNTRY PARK, ALLINGTON LANE,
WEST END
Applicant: Eastleigh Borough Council
Proposal: Provision of new visitor facilities comprising the creation of tented events space at Highwood Barn Hub, Remodelling of Highwood and Kingfisher barns, Reprovision of play equipment at existing play areas, addition of 1no. modular visitor building at High Hill Field, Provision of new parking area, Rewilding of existing parking bays on north west side of access road, installation of cess pits, alterations to access roads and footpaths and associated hard and soft landscaping and ancillary structures.

Recommendation: **Subject to:**

- i) Submission of infiltration testing information for the sustainable drainage system to allow the council to complete the habitat regulation assessment.**
- ii) The receipt and consideration of Natural England's comments on the council's habitat regulation assessment.**
- iii) Submission of a bat mitigation strategy and the receipt and consideration of the Ecology Officer's comments.**
- iv) Submission of an air quality impact assessment and a noise impact assessment and receipt and consideration of the Environmental Health Officers comments.**
- v) The imposition of any necessary additional or amended conditions including updated list of amended plans.**

To Delegate back to the Executive Head of Housing and Economy in conjunction with the Chair, Vice Chair and Local Ward Councillors to GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS AND REASONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans numbered: IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1000, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1001 Rev0, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1002 Rev0, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1010 Rev0, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1011, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1012 Rev0, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1015, ICVP-RHP-HB-XX-DR-A- P S0 P0377 1100 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-HB-XX-DR-A- 1101 RevP, ICVP-RHP-HB-XX-DR 1102 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-KB-XX-DR- P P0377 1110 RevP, IVCP-RHP-KB_XX_DR_A1111 Rev P, IVCP-RHP-KB-XX-DR-1112 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-HB-XX-DR-A-2100 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-HB-XX-DR-2101 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-HB-XX-DR-2102 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-KB-XX-DR-A-2110 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-KB-XX-DR-2111 Rev P, ICVP-RHP-KB-XX-DR 2112 Rev P, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-2120 Rev0, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-2121, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-2122 Rev0, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-2123, IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-2130, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-001 Rev 02, LLD2475-LAN-REP-002-00, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-004 Rev 02, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-005 Rev 02, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-006 Rev 01, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-007 Rev 01, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-008 Rev 01, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-009 Rev 01, LLD2475-LAN-DWG-010-00, LLD2475-ARB-DWG-010 Rev 01, LLD2475-LAN-DWG-011-00 Rev 01, LLD2475-LAN-DWG-012 Rev 01, LLD2475-LAN-DWG-100-00, LLD2475-LAN-DWG-101-00, LLD2475-LAN-DWG-110-00 & LLD2475-LAN-DWG-111-00
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved documents and all recommended measures shall be in place before the development is brought into use:
 - Landscaping Design Strategy by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, dated 12/4/22 (referenced LLD2475-LAN-REP-001)
 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal by by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, dated 12/4/22 (referenced LLD2475-LPL-REP-001)
 - Ecological Impact Assessment by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, dated 12/4/22 (referenced LLD2475-ECO-REP-002-00-EclA Rev01)
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Report by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, dated 4/5/22 (referenced LLD2475 Rev00)
 - Shadow Regulations Assessment by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, dated 16th May 2022 (referenced LLD2475-ECO-REP-004)
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment by by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, dated 12/4/22 (referenced LLD2475-ARB-REP-002 Rev01)
 - Transport Assessment by Whitby Wood, dated 13/4/22 (referenced 12563361 Rev01)
 - Flood Risk Assessment by Whitby Wood, dated 21/1/22 (referenced P450815-WW-XX-XX-RP-C-0001)
 - Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan by Whitby Wood, dated 18/3/22 (referenced P450815-WW-XX-XX-RP-C-0002)
 - Drainage Strategy by Whitby Wood, dated 21/1/22 (referenced P450815-WW-XX-XX-RP-C-0003)
 - Sustainability Statement by Selta Green Environmental Design, dated

11/4/22 (referenced S2 P02)

- Cesspit Specifications by New Hade Pumps (quote P-150301A)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 The development hereby permitted shall start no later than three years from the date of this decision.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 4 No excavation, demolition or development related works shall take place on site until an arboricultural monitoring statement proposal, detailing supervision activity and inspections of tree protection measures, has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved arboricultural monitoring statement proposal must be adhered to in full, and may only be modified subject to written agreement from the Local Planning Authority. This condition may only be fully discharged upon completion of the proposed development, subject to submission of monitoring reports.

Reason: To retain and protect the existing trees which form an important part of the amenity of the locality.

- 5 The development must accord with the arboricultural report reference LLD2475-ARB-REP-002. No excavation, demolition or development related works shall commence until the tree protection measures have been installed as per the tree retention and protection plans. Once installed, no access by vehicles or placement of goods, chemicals, fuels, soil or other materials shall take place within the protected area. Tree protection measures shall be retained in their approved form for the duration of the work and may only be modified subject to written agreement from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To retain and protect the existing trees which form an important part of the amenity of the locality.

- 6 No site clearance, demolition or construction work shall start until a Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The development thereafter shall only take place in accordance with the approved method statement which shall include:

- (a) The phasing of the works;
- (b) The protection of onsite and offsite ecological interests including maintaining water quality;
- (c) The arrangements for deliveries associated with construction works;
- (e) Location of temporary site buildings, compounds, construction material, plant storage areas and contractor parking;
- (f) Protection of pedestrian routes during construction;
- (g) Details of the methodology for dealing with construction dust;
- (h) Details of the methodology for ensuring dirt is not transferred onto the highway from the site (i.e. wheel washers), and onwards mitigation should this fail, (such as the employment of mechanical road sweepers).
- (i) Hours of work

Reason: To limit the impact of the development during the demolition and construction works.

- 7 No development shall start until a biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan, which provides detail of the planting management and monitoring of the biodiversity uplift to the site. The biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan should be based upon the ecological mitigation and enhancements detailed within the Ecological Impact Assessment, Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment & Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity.
- 8 No development shall start until a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping scheme shall cover the specifications for all hard & soft landscaping together with a landscape planting, maintenance and management plan. The hard landscaping shall be in place before the development is brought into use and the soft landscaping shall be planted before the end of the first planting season following completion of the development. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and to the appropriate British Standard.
Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the locality and to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring residents.
- 9 For a period of no less than 5 years after planting, any trees or plants which are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced as soon as is reasonably practicable with others of the same species, size and number as originally approved in the landscaping scheme.
Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities and biodiversity value of the site and its surroundings.
- 10 The modular building at High Hill Field shall not be brought onto site, until details and samples of the materials to be used in the external surfaces of the modular building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
Reason: To ensure a satisfactory visual appearance in the interest of the amenities of the area.
- 11 No external lighting shall be installed in relation to the development hereby permitted until lighting details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then accord with the approved details.
Reasons: In the interest of amenity and ecology.
- 12 The development shall not be brought into use until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for new impermeable areas and roofs at the site, based on the principles within the Drainage Strategy Report ref: P450815-WW-XX-XX-RP-C-0003, has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details should include:
a. A technical summary highlighting any changes to the design from that within the approved Drainage Strategy Report.

- b. Infiltration test results undertaken in accordance with BRE365 and providing a representative assessment of those locations where infiltration features are proposed for new impermeable areas and roofs.
- c. Detailed drainage plans to include type, layout and dimensions of drainage features for new impermeable areas and roofs including references to link to the drainage calculations.
- d. Detailed drainage calculations for new impermeable areas and roofs to demonstrate there is sufficient attenuation for storm events up to and including 1:100 + climate change.

The development shall then accord with the approved details.

Reasons: To ensure a sustainable drainage system has been provided.

- 13 The approved development at the Highwood Barn Hub shall not be brought into use until an outline events management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This includes events to be held at the pop up market square and events space (as shown on the approved site plan IVCP-RHP-01-XX-DR-A-1011Rev0).

Reason: In the interest of protecting residential amenity and to ensure that the main role of the site is predominantly for nature based activities.

Note to Applicant: In accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021), Eastleigh Borough Council takes a positive approach to the handling of development proposals so as to achieve, whenever possible, a positive outcome and to ensure all proposals are dealt with in a timely manner.

Report:

This application has been referred to Committee as the site is owned and managed by Eastleigh Borough Council.

Characteristics of Site and Locality

1. Itchen Valley Country Park covers 182 hectares of mixed landscapes including ancient woodland and open fields as well as wetlands, water meadows and pastures next to the banks of the River Itchen. Itchen Valley Country Park provides an opportunity for people to explore nature and partake in a range of leisure and recreational pursuits within the confines of a managed country park. The park offers various walking/ cycling trails, recreational fields, two play areas, Go-Ape, a cafe, picnic areas, visitor facilities and car parking.
2. Itchen Valley Country Park is located within an area of countryside, close to the northern side of West End and is accessed off Allington Lane. To the south is a row of dwellings, which back onto the country park.

Background to the Application

3. Itchen Valley Country Park is a popular visitor attraction, with the visitor numbers increasing by 77,000 over the past five years, which represents a 35% increase. This trend is expected to continue with predicted population growth within both the borough and wider area. As a result, of the increased visitor numbers the site is showing significant signs of wear and tear, with play equipment, footpaths and carpark surfaces all nearing, or at the end of, their life span.
4. It is recognised that Itchen Valley Country Park is in need of significant investment. However, rather than just replacing the existing equipment as necessary, the council has drawn up a more comprehensive scheme to tackle some of the existing layout issues and lack of facilities at the county park and thus improve overall visitor experience and increase dwell times.

Itchen Valley County Park Improvement Scheme

5. Under the proposed scheme, a new car parking area will be created at the front of the site (to the south of Highwood Barn Hub). This will reduce the number of vehicles that go through the central part of the park, providing better separation between pedestrians and vehicles, which in turn will create a more relaxing atmosphere for visitors. The existing car parks, on the western side of the access road, are to be rewilded in native woodland grasses and ferns and thus increase the biodiversity value of the site.
6. A new footpath will take visitors from the proposed car park to Highwood Barn hub, which will provide a clear arrival point for visitors with easy access to the existing café, play area, seating and toilets and onwards to the trails within the park. The area at Highwood Barn will be upgraded and rearranged to provide a formal meeting/ events space and allow for a more flexible use. To accommodate this, the position of the play area is being moved slightly/ extended and new equipment is proposed. The internal layout of Highwood Barn and Kingfisher Barn will be reworked to provide better public welfare facilities and additional office/ storage space for staff.
7. At High Hill Field (the far end of the park) a modular building will provide public toilets and a kiosk offering light refreshments. This is partially important to people using the recreation space, Go Ape and the surrounding woodlands, who currently have to walk 400m to use the facilities at the other end of the site. The modular building will also contain a function room for public hire, which replaces the existing function room at Kingfisher barn.
8. The work at High Hill Fields also includes the replacement of the play equipment in the play area, which will be extended to incorporate a small orchard and picnic area at the far end. Finally, the scheme also includes new footpaths, such as the memorial walk, extensive landscape and new sustainable drainage features.

Planning Application

9. The planning application encompasses the following elements:

10. Car Park

A new 147 space car park is to be constructed to the south of the Highwood Barn Hub, to the west of the access road. This includes seven disabled parking bays, four family parking bays, eight electric vehicle charging points, nine motorbike parking bays and covered cycle parking. The car parking spaces are located within three interconnected areas off the main access road and broken up with landscaping. To the west of the car parking area is the new pathway leading to Highwood Barn Hub, which will be lit by low level bollard lighting.

11. Highwood Barn Hub

The reconfiguring of the existing area in front of Highwood Barn will create a formal gathering and events space, with a temporary covered textile canopy measuring 10.5m by 15m. The current private access to the water meadows will be rerouted around the edge of the Highwood Barn Hub (currently this goes through the middle of the visitor area).

12. Highwood Barn Hub is one of the key locations within the park that will hold events such as open aircraft markets, talks, music, family performances, outdoor films and stand-up comedy. The events space incorporates the area to the west of Highwood Barn (where the proposed temporary seating arrangement is shown on the proposed site plans). These events will usually run for part of the day or evening up until dusk (10pm in the summer) and could be up to three times per month in peak season and less in low season. The larger events will be able to accommodate no more than 150-200 people due to the size of the area.

13. Replacement Play Area at Highwood Barn Hub

This fenced play area is aimed at families with smaller children involving themed play, storytelling and imaginative role playing. Proposed play elements are to include timber climbing structure, swings (double and baby swing), stepping logs, rope net, bridge, springers, and wigwam.

14. Kingfisher Barn

The external alterations to Kingfisher Barn involve the addition of new rear windows, office and W.C. doors and louvred opening for the plant.

15. Welcome Building at High Hill Field

The timber frame modular building is located at the entrance to High Hill Fields and consists of two pitched roof wings connected by a central entrance feature. The first wing contains the café, store and toilet facilities and the other contains a larger 64m² function room.

16. Replacement Playground at High Hill Field

This fenced play area is aimed at older children, whilst providing natural and informal elements inclusive for all ages. The play area is to include

adventure trail, climbing structures with ropes, bridges, slides, play bridge, mounds and net climbing structure.

17. Cesspits

New cesspits are proposed for both the welcome building at High Hill Field site and as a replacement for the existing cess pit serving the Highwood Barn and Kingfisher Barn. For Highwood Barn the cesspit will be placed under neath the existing car parks to the west of the access track, which are to be rewilded.

Permitted Development

18. The wider program of work at Itchen Valley Country Park incorporates new pathways (including creation of a memorial walk), internal remodelling of Highwood Barn and Kingfisher Barn's, the picnic area and orchard at High Hill Fields, repairs and extensions to existing trails, car park rewilding, installation of a pay at exit car parking system (with automatic number plate recognition); BBQ equipment renewal, tree management works, way finding signage, and small ancillary structures or buildings under 200 cubic metres (such as cycle storage). These minor works fall within the council's permitted development rights and so are outside of the scope of the planning application.

Screening

19. Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, an EIA screening opinion is not required for the proposal, as the type of development proposed does not fall within schedule 1 or schedule 2.

20. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) a habitat regulation assessment is necessary for the development as the site is adjacent to the River Itchen SAC and SSSI.

21. A shadow habitat regulations assessment has been submitted by the agent which details mitigation to ensure that the proposal will not have a likely significant impact on the protected site. In addition to this, the Local Planning Authority has requested infiltration testing be carried out to demonstrate that the sustainable drainage system is achievable and ensure that the water quality of the River Itchen will not be adversely affected by the development.

22. On receipt of this information the Local Planning Authority will undertake its own habitat regulation assessment, in consultation Natural England,

Supporting Information

23. The application is accompanied by the following reports and technical assessments:

- Design and Access Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Sustainability Statement
- Landscape Design Strategy
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement
- Tree Retention and Protection Proposal
- Biodiversity Net Gain Statement
- Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment

Relevant Planning History

Reference:	Description:	Decision:
F/18/82351	Alterations and additions to fenestration in front and rear elevations of Highwood Barn; addition of vent to front roof elevation; and erection of covered shelter to the west of the main building.	Permitted (Mar 2018)
F/15/77227	Construction of high wire tree top junior course in association with existing operation and extension of car park	Permitted (Nov 2015)
F/13/73749	Replacement and relocation of reception cabin with associated decking and installation of a packaged pump system and associated pipework to connect to existing cesspool	Permitted (Sep 2014)
F/10/67638	Installation of play equipment	Permitted (Sep 2010)
F/09/66053	Construction of high wire adventure course, cabin and shelter, 4no. Stockades, provision and surfacing of 2no. Car parks and felling of 11no. Trees	Permitted (Jul 2010)
F/07/59860	Excavation of new dipping pond and construction of wooden platform and formation of new access path.	Permitted (Jun 2007)
F/06/56914	Erection of amenity building containing toilets, changing room, Rangers room, kitchen and classroom, re-siting of existing play area and felling of trees	Permitted (Jun 2006)
Z/30618/001	Outline: Erection of interpretation/ visitor centre and car parking	Consented (Nov 1988)
Z/30618	Construction of six car parking areas	Consented

Representations Received (Summarised)

24.1 comment letter stating that some areas of the park should be kept off limits for wildlife. Also requesting upgrades to local cycle routes.

Consultation Responses

Landscape Officer – No objection

25. Subject to conditions securing hard and soft landscaping details, a landscape maintenance and management plan and to replace any failed tree planting for the first 5 years.

26. I agree with the conclusions of the submitted Landscape & Visual Appraisal, that the visual impact on wider views of the proposed improvements, including the new parking areas, will be limited as the site is well enclosed by topography and existing vegetation. However, there will be some visual impact on internal views for visitors to the country park. As such, the existing and proposed main parking areas should be screened and softened as much as possible to avoid any adverse impact on the character of the country park. The consultation response goes on to provide detailed advice on planting, surfacing, and creating shade within the development.

Tree Officer – No objection

27. Subject to conditions requiring the installation of tree protections measures (as outlined within the arboricultural report) and the submission of an arboricultural monitoring statement.

Environmental Health - Additional information required.

28. The pollution climate in this area is influenced by road traffic on the M27 motorway and Allington Lane. Dwellings located alongside the Country Park access road and off Allington Lane currently receive noise levels in the moderate to high range as averaged over a 16-hour daytime. Dwelling holders close to the access road and junction may notice vehicles and coaches bound to and departing the Country Park and an increase in vehicles generated by the development. It is recommended that a noise impact assessment, air quality assessment are submitted before issuing the planning decision and construction environmental management plan is secured via condition.

Ecology Officer – No Objection

29. Subject to a detailed bat mitigation strategy being agreed before issuing the planning decision, and conditions securing a biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan and construction environmental management plan.

30. Impact of the proposal on the Itchen SAC/SSSI

31. Of primary concern from an ecological point of view would be indirect impacts during both construction and operation on the River Itchen SAC/SSSI. A shadow HRA has been submitted, which indicates that appropriate mitigation can be provided to prevent a likely significant impact on the SAC/ SSSI. Infiltration testing information is required to ensure that infiltration can be achieved on site for the sustainable drainage system, otherwise alternative methods will need to be considered.

32. Habitats

33. The primary loss of habitat will be a substantial area of grassland in order to form the new carpark. There will also be other minor losses of grassland in places to form new paths and alterations to existing facilities. In ecological terms, the loss of these areas of grassland and the minor works to areas of the woodland are not considered significant, and will be compensated for through an enhancement plan.

34. Biodiversity Net Gain

35. Taking into account the proposals for various elements of habitat creation (including grassland creation/enhancement, SuDS features, woodland creation in areas of existing carpark) the scheme is predicted to deliver 29.7 habitat units which represents a c.12% uplift post construction. The hedge retention and creation is predicted to lead to the creation of 3.04 units which is a 54% uplift for hedgerows. This calculation relies on the new hedgerows around the proposed carpark reaching “moderate” quality. Given that they will be located in and around a carpark and are likely to be heavily managed this may be an optimistic “best case” scenario. Even taking this into account and reducing the quality to low, the proposals are still likely to deliver a gain in hedgerow units which would be policy compliant.

HCC Highway Officer – No objection

36. Subject to a construction method statement condition

- The access to and from Itchen Valley Country Park site is unchanged by the proposals and has adequate visibility splays The Transport Assessment indicates that the Allington Lane junction has spare capacity for the additional vehicle flows anticipated by the development.
- The ANPR parking system will ensure that vehicles do not have to wait at the barrier and so there will not be queuing back onto the highway.
- It is understood that a short term period of free parking time will be allowed for on site in order to accommodate drop-off's and pick-up's to reduce the potential of vehicles parking out on Allington lane to avoid short term charges.
- The car park will result in an increase of 103 vehicle parking spaces (from 327 to 430 spaces). The car parking layout of this is acceptable with adequate 6.0m aisle widths for ease of turning in and out of parking spaces, and for two way circulation.

- 32 cycle spaces are provided and the applicant intends to undertake regular cycle parking reviews, and increasing numbers if required, which is welcomed.
- Pedestrian routes to and from the new parking area to the south of the site are also well connected and provided for to enable safe pedestrian movement between the parking and the wider facilities of the site.
- Servicing of the site is outlined within the Transport Statement, with associated vehicle tracking diagrams provided to demonstrate how this will be achievable. This is accepted.

HCC Flood and Water Management – No objection, subject to drainage condition

37. We are satisfied that the proposed new permeable surfaces along with accompanying swales and basins will be appropriate for this development, as these areas would be 'self-draining' and are likely to provide betterment. These features should not require lining.

38. A condition is required to provide more detailed calculations for the proposed new impermeable areas including hard standings and roofs, supported by infiltration testing results so that associated infiltration structures are sized appropriately. We are satisfied that there is sufficient available space for amendments to the drainage design, and that water quality management provided by the drainage system will be appropriate.

39. Hedge End Parish Council – No response provided.

40. HCC Minerals and Waste - No response provided

41. HCC Access Development Officer - No response provided

Policy Context and Designations Applicable to Site

- Outside Urban Edge - Countryside
- Within Settlement Gap
- Within Ancient Woodland
- Within Site of Interest for Nature Conservation
- Adjacent to Special Area of Conservation
- Mineral Safeguarding Site

Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036):

42. Strategic policies:

- S1 (Sustainable Development);
- S2 (Promotion of New Development);
- S5 (New Development Within the Countryside);
- S6 (Protection of Settlement Gaps);
- S9 (Green Infrastructure);

- 12 (Transport Infrastructure).

43. Development Management policies:

- DM1 (General Development Criteria);
- DM3 (Adapting to Climate Change);
- DM6 (Sustainable Surface Water Management and Watercourse Management);
- DM11 (Nature Conservation);
- DM13 (Transport);
- DM14 (Car Parking);
- DM32 (Protection of Recreation and Open Space Facilities);
- DM34 (New & Enhanced Recreation and Open Space Facilities);
- DM40 (Funding Infrastructure).

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan

44. Policy 15 – Safeguarding of Mineral Resources.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Quality Places (November 2011);
- Biodiversity (December 2009);
- Trees and Development (April 2022).

National Planning Policy Framework

45. At national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF' or the 'Framework') is a material consideration of significant weight in the determination of planning applications. The National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF' or the 'Framework') states that (as required by statute) applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and sets out a general presumption in favour of sustainable development unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

46. Three dimensions of sustainability are to be sought jointly: economic (supporting economy and ensuring land availability); social (providing housing, creating high quality environment with accessible local services); and environmental (contributing to, protecting and enhancing natural, built and historic environment) whilst local circumstances should also be taken into account, so that development responds to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

National Planning Practice Guidance

47. Where material, the Planning Practice Guidance which supports the provisions and policies of the NPPF should be afforded weight in the consideration and determination of planning applications.

Assessment of Proposal: Development Plan and / or Legislative Background

48. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require a Local Planning Authority determining an application to do so in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 and the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan 2013. The NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance constitute material considerations of significant weight.

Principle, Countryside and Settlement Gap:

49. The planning application is to replace and improve the current visitor facilities at Itchen Valley Country Park, which is an established recreational use. As such the principle of development accords with Policies S5 & DM32, which allows development relating to outdoor recreation uses within the countryside.

50. Part of Itchen Valley Country Park is also within the settlement gap, which separates Southampton, West End and Eastleigh. The settlement gap encompasses the whole of the open field to the west of the access road, with the gap stretching from Allington Lane to Kingfisher Barn.

51. Policy S6 allows new development within the settlement gap, providing they do not undermine the physical extent or visual separation of settlements; and they do not have an urbanising effect detrimental to either the character of the countryside or separate identities of adjoining settlements.

52. In terms of the planning application, the proposed work at the Highwood Barn Hub and the new car park is within the settlement gap. The work to create the Highwood Barn Hub is of a modest scale and will blend amongst the existing barns and structures. The proposed play equipment will replace and update equipment in the existing play area and will not extend the site further into the gap. As such it is considered that this element of the planning application will not have a detrimental impact on the gap.

53. The largest change is the introduction of the new car parking area in the open field to the front of Highwood Barn. The car parking area covers roughly 135m by 50m (excluding landscaping) which marks a significant

portion of the field. Policy DM14 notes that proposals for car parking within settlement gaps will only be acceptable in exceptional cases and that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the adverse impacts.

54. In this case, the proposed car parking area is to support an existing recreational use that has seen a 35% increase in visitor numbers over the last five years. Currently there is insufficient parking during times of high visitor demand, meaning that vehicles park along the access road or High Hill field has to be opened up for overspill parking. This requires the supervision of marshals, which is resource intensive, and negatively impacts on visitor experience. As such a long term parking solution is required.

55. Options for additional car parking outside, of the settlement gap, have been fully considered but come with their own draw backs. One option is to expand the existing High Hill Field car park, however this was discounted by the Applicant as it would have resulted in the partial loss of recreational green space, which is one of the key attractions of the park and would also limit future events. The design and access statement also identified other areas off the main access road for parking, including knocking through the existing small central car parking areas to make one large space. However, all of these options would have resulted in extensive tree and vegetation clearance, which would have been detrimental to the ancient woodlands, SINC and biodiversity value of the site.

56. On this basis, it is considered that there is an exceptional case for locating the car parking area within the gap in order to support the running of the established and popular country park and to limit its ecological impacts. Locating the car parking area at the front of the site also has the benefit of keeping many vehicles outside of the main recreational parts of the site. It will also create a well serviced and clear entrance point at the renovated Highwood Barn Hub.

57. In terms of the car parks visual impact on the settlement gap, this is fairly limited. While the car parking area covers a large section of the open field (roughly a third), it is a low level structure and the land topography and vegetation (including new landscaping) will effectively screen views of the car park from outside of the site. As such the proposal will not visually undermine the gap or be detrimental to the appearance of its countryside surroundings.

58. In terms of the physical impact on the gap, the proposed car park will reduce the size of the gap, but this is only a slight intrusion when compared to the total area of the settlement gap. Furthermore, the car park is on the very edge of the gap, a reasonable distance away from

the surrounding settlement and so will not undermine the separate identities of adjoining settlements.

59. In conclusion, the car parking area is part of a comprehensive package of improvement works at Itchen Valley Country Park. It has been shown that locating the car parking area within the settlement gap is the only reasonable viable solution and the overall the benefits of the development would outweigh its limited impact on the settlement gap. As such the proposal is considered acceptable in this regard.

Character and Appearance

60. Policy DM1 requires new development to take full and proper account of the context of the site and be well integrated in terms of massing, scale, materials, layout, design and siting both in itself and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views.

61. While the new car parking area will only have a limited impact on the gap, it will completely change the internal views for arriving visitors when they enter the country park.

62. Currently the western side of the access road is open allowing views over the countryside at the approach to Highwood Barn. In contrast the proposed car parking area will enclose the current views with native hedge and tree planting. Along the western side is a shared pedestrian cycleway leading to Highwood Barn and next to this is a row of landscaped mounds containing trees, native shrubs and wildflower grassland to integrate the car park into the surrounding landscape. While this will result in a significant change to the approach to the park, the enclosed parking areas will have a natural setting, which visitors expect when they arrive at a country park.

63. At the other end of the park, the proposal includes the provision of a single storey, modular building at the entrance to High Hill Fields. This building is necessary as it provides a small drinks/ food outlet and welfare facilities, which are lacking in this end of the country park. The building uses wooden cladding to fit in with its countryside surroundings and is of an interesting design that is well articulated. It has also been carefully positioned so that it is easily accessible for customers but does not block access or views onto the recreational field.

64. The remainder of the work is relatively modest in scale and in keeping with the existing buildings and structures. The Highwood Barn Hub will be upgraded and includes a tented structure over the new events space, which provides shade and is removable as necessary. Other structures, such as the replacement play equipment, are designed to improve upon

the existing facilities that are reaching the end of their life and play equipment and materials are in keeping with the country park setting.

65. Overall, the scale, massing, siting and design of the proposed development is considered appropriate for the recreational facility at Itchen Valley Country Park and will not involve structures or activities that would detract from the rural character of the countryside.

Trees and Ecology:

66. Policy DM1 requires that development does not result in the loss or damage to trees, woodlands, priority habitats or landscape features of value to biodiversity, unless they can be replaced with features of an equivalent or enhanced value. Policy DM11 also looks for development to protect priority species and habitats both on and off sites and also requires new development to seek a biodiversity net gain.
67. Despite the woodland nature of the site, the vast majority of the proposal will not affect the trees. In a small number of cases tree removals are required to make way for the development, but these are not high value trees and replacement planting will take place. Where work is close to existing trees suitable mitigation is proposed to ensure that the trees are not impacted by the construction work or finished development. Instances where the work involves a higher risk to the existing trees, then the Tree Officer recommends that supervision and site monitoring details are secured via condition.
68. The proposal is also accompanied by an ecological impact assessment, and supporting surveys, which identifies a number of protected and notable species within the country park and surrounding area. These include the presence of a maternity roost of pipistrelles bats within Highwood Barn and Kingfisher Barn; records of dormice (particularly the eastern portion of the site); there is the likely presence of badgers within the park and otters, water voles and a diverse range of birds along the River Itchen and surrounding water meadows. It is also likely that there are a wide range of invertebrates present over the wider site and adjoining habitats.
69. The most significant work is to Kingfisher (& Highwood) Barn, which contain existing bat roosts. As bats are a protected species then a detailed bat mitigation strategy (taking into account the buildings design details) will need to be agreed upfront before issuing the decision. The other impacts on protected/notable species are predicted to be short term and suitable mitigation is provided within the ecological impact assessments.
70. In terms of habitats, the proposed car park will result in the loss of a substantial area of grassland. However, in ecological terms, the loss of this grassland is not considered significant and will be more than compensated for through the proposed rewilding of the existing car parking area next to

the ancient woodland. An ecological enhancement plan will be secured via condition and there incorporating the necessary biodiversity net gains.

Access, Parking and Transport Matters:

71. Policy DM13 requires all new development to make provision for sustainable transport options and have a safe and convenient access to the highway network.
72. Itchen Valley County Park is located within an area of countryside that is not particularly well served by public transport, with the nearest bus stop being 8-9min walking distance and covering a limited range of services. As such the options for sustainable travel are limited. However, the proposal does make provision for a shared off road cycle/ pedestrian routes within the park (including a new route around the car parking area). It also includes the provision of new covered storage for 32 bicycles (split between the proposed and existing car parking areas) and as such provides a good level of facilities for cyclists.
73. However, the location of the country park means the vast majority of visitors use private vehicles and as visitor numbers have increased this is putting pressure on the existing parking infrastructure.
74. The country park currently has 327 parking spaces. These spaces are spread across eleven existing car parks, many of which use unmarked bays, which are inefficient as badly parked cars reduces the parking capacity at the site. At busy times, the lack of parking creates difficulties with visitors searching for spaces and results in overflow parking clogging up the access road. During these times, High Hill Fields is often opened up for car parking, but this reduces the available recreational space and also requires additional staffing resource to marshal traffic. Such situations occur approximately 10 to 15 times a year, and particularly during the Easter weekend when the majority of visitation during that month is condensed into a four-day period.
75. To ease the parking issues, the proposal will create a 147 space car park, which equates to an increase of approximately 100 car parking spaces (once the rewilding of some of the existing car parks is taken account of). The car park areas will contain marked spaces to ensure the most efficient parking arrangement and include seven disabled parking spaces to cater for a wider range of visitors and electric charging points to promote cleaner forms of transport.
76. The proposed 147 spaces are split between three interconnecting sections, with the 57 spaces on the most southerly section being overflow spaces available during busy periods. The new car parking area is well laid out with adequate 6.0m aisle widths for ease of turning in and out of parking spaces, and allowing two-way circulation.

77. In terms of the number of vehicle trips, this will vary greatly throughout the year with higher numbers expected during the summer months, weekends, holiday periods and organised events. On an average day it is anticipated that 2 additional vehicle trips would occur in the AM peak period and 36 additional trips would occur within the PM peak period. These figures represent a minimal increase over and above existing traffic flows on Allington Lane.
78. A transport assessment has been provided which sets out the anticipated trip rates and concludes that the site access onto Allington Lane is able to accommodate the additional capacity with minimal anticipated delays to the free flow of the highway network. The transport assessment has been reviewed by the County Council Highways Officer and no objection has been raised.

Residential Amenity:

79. Policy DM1 states that new development should not have an unacceptable impact upon the residential amenity of existing dwellings. This is supported by Policy DM8 which notes that development will not be permitted if it is likely to cause a loss of amenity through air pollution or noise.
80. Itchen Valley Country Park is accessed off Allington Lane, which is directly adjacent to a row of residential properties. The closest of these dwellings (Birchwood Stud) is directly alongside the access road and is approximately 100m from the proposed overflow car parking area, 300m from Highwood Barn Hub and 550m from High Hill Field.
81. The new car parking area has the capacity for an additional 100 vehicles on the site. Whilst it is noted that the increase in car parking provision is primarily designed to accommodate the existing increase in visitor numbers, the proposed work also includes the betterment and expansion of the existing facilities, which in itself is likely to attract higher visitor numbers. Visitor numbers will vary greatly throughout the year and during peak times could result in a high volume of traffic using the access road and potentially causing an issue for the existing residential dwellings, particularly in terms of noise and air quality.
82. In line with the Environmental Health Officers comments, noise & air quality impact assessments are required upfront to enable a full assessment of these issues and ensure appropriate mitigation is built into the development where necessary so that the proposal does not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity.
83. The other key part of the proposal is the creation of a new events area at the Highwood Barn Hub. This area will support and expand upon the range of activities and live events held at the park, which includes occasional craft markets, talks, music, family performances, outdoor films and stand-up comedy. However, the majority of the events are intended to be related

to recreational and wellbeing activities, and the scale and frequency of the events would be ancillary to the main use of the country park.

84. It is also noted that many of these live events, and films screenings, have already been successfully trialled at the site without undue impact residential properties, which are more than 300m away. The size of the events at the Highwood Barn Hub is naturally restricted by the available space (no more than 200 people) and the few evening events are to finish no later than dusk for safety reasons. The events do not require any permanent structures and the detail of any new lighting is required via condition.

85. While the creation of the events hub will result in an increased number of events (up to three a month in the summer) these events will be managed on behalf of the council, who have direct control over the site. The Environmental Health Team have also been proactively engaging with the organisers over noise control to ensure that noise and disturbance is kept to a minimum. On this basis, it is considered that restrictive conditions on the performance events are not necessary.

86. However, it is recommended that a basic set of principles are agreed via condition to ensure that disturbance is kept to a minimum and that the country park remains primarily for nature based activities.

Foul and Surface Water Drainage

87. Itchen Valley Country Park is not connected to the sewer network and as such the proposal requires two new cesspits to be installed; one for the new modular building at High Hill Field and the second to replace the existing cesspit for the Highwood Barn Hub. In principle the cesspits are an acceptable solution, but the final details will need to be agreed via condition. Arboricultural information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed cesspits will not damage protected trees.

88. In terms of planning policy, Policy DM6 requires new development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems in order to reduce flooding and maintain water quality. This is particularly important at the country park which is close to the banks of the River Itchen.

89. The proposed car parking area has been designed with its own integrated sustainable drainage system that uses infiltration through permeable paving, basins and swales.

90. The car parks hard surfacing will be permeable with a granular subbase to allow for temporary storage and subsequent pollutant removal until the water can be percolated into the ground. A number of infiltration basins are strategically located within the car park to capture any surface water runoff.

They will appear dry most of the time and will only be used during severe storm events where rainwater can not infiltrate into the subbase quick enough. Water will then be stored in the basin until it is infiltrated away. Finally, swales are positioned between each of the three sections of the car park and will be used to drain the access road, in a similar manner as the infiltration basins.

91. This sustainable drainage system will slow down and treat water runoff from the car park. Pollutants, (including hydrocarbons), are removed from runoff through filtration, bio-degradation and settlement within the substructure of the permeable paving, basins and swales before clean water moves off the site. Other smaller soak ways and drainage systems are added to the proposed modular building and existing structures within the country park.
92. Infiltration testing data is required to ensure that the sustainable drainage system will work on the site, although there is space on site for this system to be redesigned if infiltration is not possible. On this basis the council is satisfied that an appropriate sustainable drainage system can be completed on the site.

Sustainability Measures and Climate Change:

93. 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.
94. The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. It is not part of development plan or emerging plan policy, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Emerging Local Plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.
95. The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Local Plan 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 not expected to be directly impacted by the potential effects of climate change and is expected to have a negligible impact on the climate because of the development or its use.

Equalities Implications:

96. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

a. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- i. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- ii. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- iii. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

97. 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

98. The planning application is a key part of the wider program of works to improve the existing facilities and visitor experience at Itchen Valley Country Park. The principle of development is acceptable and proposed details meet the relevant planning policies, subject to the information and suggested conditions outlined at the start of the report.

