

Report to	Planning Committee
Date of Committee	14 February 2013
By	Director of Planning
Local Authority	East Hampshire District Council
Application No:	SDNP/12/01868/FUL
Validation Date	12 October 2012
Target Date:	7 December 2012
Applicant:	Mr Brendan Flynn (South Downs National Park Authority)
Proposal:	The change of use of land within the Queen Elizabeth Country Park from scrub land to use as a compound, with provision of container storage and hardstanding.
Site Address	Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Gravel Hill Waterlooville Hampshire PO8 0QE
Purpose of Report	The application is reported to Committee for a decision

Recommendation: That planning permission be granted, for the reason and subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 10.1 of this report.

Executive Summary

The South Downs Ranger and Volunteer Ranger services are seeking consent for use of land as a compound to park works vehicles, including the laying of additional hardstanding, along with the siting of two storage containers to provide storage for tools and equipment. The proposed use would be for a temporary period, tied in to an existing Hampshire County Council Lease on the land and wider Country Park.

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is located within Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECP) a little to the south of the Country Park's Visitor Centre. The land is roughly triangular in shape. It is generally level, with a gentle slope to the north.
- 1.2 The site is partly covered by an area of hardstanding consisting of compacted stone. A metal shipping container is located at the north end of the site. The steeply wooded embankment of the A3 trunk road runs along the western edge of the site, while the eastern edge contains new tree planting, an existing small tree, and twin mild steel tubular six bar access gates to the site. The southern boundary is formed by the back wall of a stable block used for storage by others.
- 1.3 Access to the site is via the QECP internal road system, which leads almost directly off of the A3.

2. Relevant Planning History

- 2.1 There is no relevant planning history for this site.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The application proposes the change of use of the land from general scrub land to use as a

compound for the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Rangers and the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. In addition to the change of use of the land, permission is sought for the siting of two metal storage containers for the purposes of equipment, tool and materials storage, along with the extension of an existing area of hardstanding for the parking of SDNPA landrovers, pick up trucks and trailers.

- 3.2 The storage containers would be located at the northern tip of the triangular site. Each container measures 2440mm wide by 6100mm long by 2592mm high (the ISO standard 20ft x 8ft container) and is constructed of corrugated steel. The containers would be painted to an appropriate finish. One of the two containers is currently present on site and is painted Olive Green. The applicants have confirmed in writing that the second container would be painted to match.
- 3.3 The extended hardstanding would consist of compacted MOT type I sub base material. This is a crushed material with a maximum diameter of 63mm, graded down to dust, similar to the existing surfacing on part of the site.

4. Consultations

- 4.1 **Hampshire County Highways** – No Objection. The site is close to the Trunk Road A3 and as a result the Highways Agency should be consulted on this application. The proposals do not affect any public highway for which Hampshire County Council is the highway authority. I do note that the proposal involves the piping of a length of ditch and this should be drawn to the attention of the Highways Agency as it may take surface water from the trunk road.
- 4.2 **Hampshire County Council - Archaeology** - the site lies within an area of archaeological potential. Immediately to the southwest of the proposed development site evidence of a Bronze Age settlement was found during excavations ahead of road works in the 1970s. The full extent of the settlement is unknown and may extend into the area of the proposed development. The area excavated identified a number of roundhouse and other domestic features consistent with a reasonably sized settlement of considerable local interest. Further clarification is needed on the nature and extent of any ground disturbance so that the impact upon the archaeological potential of the site can be properly assessed.
- 4.3 In response to the above comments the applicants submitted further information stating that the ground works would consist of minor disturbance to a depth of around 200mm to install the sub-base and hard standing. Although the area of proposed hardstanding is shown on the application plan, the exact extent of the works cannot be defined as it is an upgrade of the existing surfacing.
- 4.4 Subsequent discussions with the County Archaeologist concluded that, in light of the uncertainties regarding the impact on the proposed development, it would be appropriate to apply an archaeological condition to a consent (if granted).
- 4.5 **Highways Agency** – No Objection.
- 4.6 **East Hampshire District Council - Environmental Health – Pollution** - No objection, subject to any permission being temporary until 31st December 2013.
- 4.7 **Buriton Parish Council** – No response received.

5. Representations

- 5.1 One letter has been received from a member of public neither objecting to nor supporting the application, but setting out the following comments:
- There is no reference to the need or supply of water which may, for example, be needed for cleaning purposes.
 - Will there be any hazardous material stored on site?

6. Planning Policy Context

- 6.1 Applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plans in this area are the South East Plan and the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006), and the emerging Joint Core Strategy for East Hampshire District.
- 6.2 The South East Plan was adopted by the Secretary of State on 6th May 2009. The Coalition Government's revocation of the Plan in July 2010 has been found to be unlawful so the Plan remains part of the development plan. Policy C2 of the South East Plan states that the purposes of designation should be a material consideration in the making of any planning decision that would affect it.

National Park Purposes

- 6.3 The two statutory purposes of the SDNP designation are:
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas;
 - To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas.
- 6.4 If there is a conflict between these two purposes, conservation takes precedence. There is also a duty to foster the economic and social well being of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

National Planning Policy Framework and Circular 2010

- 6.5 Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was issued and came into effect on 27 March 2012. The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection and the NPPF states at paragraph 115 that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the national parks and that the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations and should also be given great weight in National Parks.
- 6.6 The development plan policies listed below have been assessed and are considered to be compliant with the NPPF.

7. Development Plan Policies

- 7.1 In addition to Policy C2 the following policies of the South East Plan are relevant to this application:

CCI: Sustainable development

BE6 Management of the Historic Environment

- 7.2 The East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006) policies of key relevance to this application are:

GS3 – Protecting the Countryside

C5 – Local landscape features

HE17 – archaeology and Ancient Monuments

The above policies are considered to be in general conformity with the NPPF.

- 7.3 The SDNPA is working jointly with East Hampshire District Council on a Joint Core Strategy for East Hampshire District. An Examination in Public took place in late October and the examination was subsequently suspended until October 2013. Nevertheless, significant weight can be given to the emerging policies in line with paragraph 2.16 of the NPPF. Within the Core Strategy the relevant emerging policies are:

CPI7 – Development in the Countryside

CP18 – Landscape

CP28 – Historic Environment

8. Planning Assessment

Principle of development

- 8.1 The location of the development has been determined by the presence of the SDNPA Ranger office within the visitor centre at QECP. Locating the Ranger/Volunteer Ranger compound and associated facilities within close proximity to the existing Ranger Area office makes operational sense and is more sustainable in terms of transport patterns than a site compound located remotely from the Ranger Office.
- 8.2 Steel shipping containers would not normally be considered appropriate (in form, design or materials) for long term retention within a National Park. They do, nevertheless, provide a secure means of storage, as is required to ensure protection of expensive tools and hazardous materials, particularly in a publicly accessible setting such as a Country Park. The self contained design of such units and lack of need for footings or foundations does have the benefit that, when it is time for them to be removed, they can be done so without significant lasting impact. Accordingly, a temporary use of up to three years may be acceptable for such structures, providing their visual and other impacts can be addressed.
- 8.3 There does, however, need to be reasonable assurance that the proposed use is for a genuinely temporary period and will not be required for longer than three years. In the case of the current application, permission is only sought until December of this year (controlled by the length of time left on Hampshire County Council's lease on this Forestry Commission site) and is intended as a temporary solution while consideration is given to the permanent provision of Ranger/Volunteer Ranger facilities across the National Park.
- 8.4 The proposal assists the purposes of the National Park over a wide area as it is providing facilities directly related to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park.

Impact on residential amenity

- 8.5 There is one residential property approx 120 metres south of the site (Bottom Cottage). This property is part of the Country Park and is located beyond existing Hampshire County Council/QECP compounds and workshops/stores, which lie between it and the application site. It is therefore considered that there would be no adverse impact upon the residential amenity of Bottom Cottage.
- 8.6 Two further residential dwellings (Bo Peep and Nexus House) lie closer to the site (95 metres and 113 metres respectively), but both are on the other side of the A3 dual carriageway and so would not be adversely affected by the proposals.

Impact on highways

- 8.7 The Highway Authority is satisfied that the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact on the free flow of traffic of the road network.
- 8.8 Historically, the predecessor organisations to the SDNPA have had a Ranger & Volunteer Ranger presence at QECP (including works compound) and so the current application is not likely to result in additional traffic. Indeed, as stated in paragraph 8.1 above, the Ranger Office within the visitor centre would mean additional traffic would be generated if there was a need to have a works compound provided on a site outside of the Country Park. The site is also accessed almost directly off the A3, and so would not result in additional traffic along minor country lanes.

Impact on Ecology

- 8.9 The site is a cleared area of land with little, if any ecological merit. Trees to the east and west (including recent native planting along the eastern side) are unlikely to be affected by the proposals. Given the temporary nature of the proposals, conditions could be applied to require the containers and hard surfacing to be removed following the cessation of the use. This would allow the site to naturally regenerate.

Landscape and Visual impact

- 8.10 The physical engineering works that are proposed would be limited in extent and would be reversible following cessation of the use.
- 8.11 With regard to visual impact, the site is screened to the south and north-west by existing store/workshops and the A3 embankment. On the north-eastern side a screen of native tree

planting has recently been introduced, which will help shield the site and the vehicles and storage containers from views within the wider Country Park. The storage containers would be painted in Olive Green so that they do not stand out from their surroundings, and this could be ensured via a condition.

Tranquillity and night skies

- 8.12 The site is adjacent to the A3 Trunk Road, but is nevertheless within the countryside away from an urban area. No external lighting is proposed and this could be ensured via a condition.

Impact on Archaeology

- 8.13 The comments of the County Archaeologist have been summarised in section 4, above. The site is within an area of archaeological potential, but the proposed groundworks would not extend below 200mm. The County Archaeologist considers a suitable archaeological monitoring condition could be applied if permission is granted.

Environmental Health/Contamination

- 8.14 No objection was received from the County Environmental Health Officer, subject to permission being for a temporary period. Hazardous items would be housed in a suitable container line with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH). A “Flamvault” storage vault has been purchased for the storage of fuel.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The proposal is for a strictly limited period of time, whilst progress is made on a more permanent solution. It is relatively small in scale and would provide facilities required by the SDNPA Ranger and Volunteer Ranger services relating to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park. The potential landscape and visual impacts would be mitigated for by existing screening planting and the painting of the proposed containers in an appropriate colour. Archaeological monitoring of the site could be ensured via a condition.

10. Reasons for recommendation and conditions

- 10.1 The reason it is recommended that the application be approved is:

The proposed temporary use of the site would not have a significant harmful impact on the area because of the relatively small scale and temporary nature of the proposals and because of existing screening and proposed painting of the containers.

And subject to the following conditions:

1. The permission hereby granted shall be for a limited period expiring on 31 December 2013 and on or before 31 December 2013 the land shall be restored to its former condition in accordance with a scheme of work submitted to and approved by the SDNPA in writing.

Reason: The development is of a type not considered suitable for permanent retention.

2. No development shall take place until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the SDNPA in writing.

The scheme of investigation shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:

1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
2. The programme for post investigation assessment
3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation

6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason: To ensure that the archaeological and historical interest of structures on the site is properly safeguarded and recorded to comply with Policy HE17 of the EHDC Local Plan Second Review (2006)

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application".

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

4. No external floodlighting whether free standing or affixed to an existing structure, shall be provided on the site at any time.

Reason: to protect the tranquillity and night skies in this rural area and to comply with Policy C2 of the South East Plan.

5. The proposed storage containers shall be painted Olive Green as agreed in the applicant's letter of 30 January 2013.

Reason: To ensure that the containers are finished in an appropriate colour to reduce their visual impact and to comply with Policy GS3 of the EHDC Local Plan Second Review (2006).

11. Crime and Disorder Implication

11.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

12. Human Rights Implications

12.1 This planning application has been considered in light of statute and case law and any interference with an individual's human rights is considered to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised.

13. Equalities Act 2010

13.1 Due regard, where relevant, has been taken to the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010.

14. Proactive Working

14.1 In reaching this decision the local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the NPPF. This has included dialogue with the applicant during the application process, including passing on concerns raised by consultees in a timely manner.

TIM SLANEY

Director of Planning

South Downs National Park Authority

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Background Documents

Letter of representation from members of the public

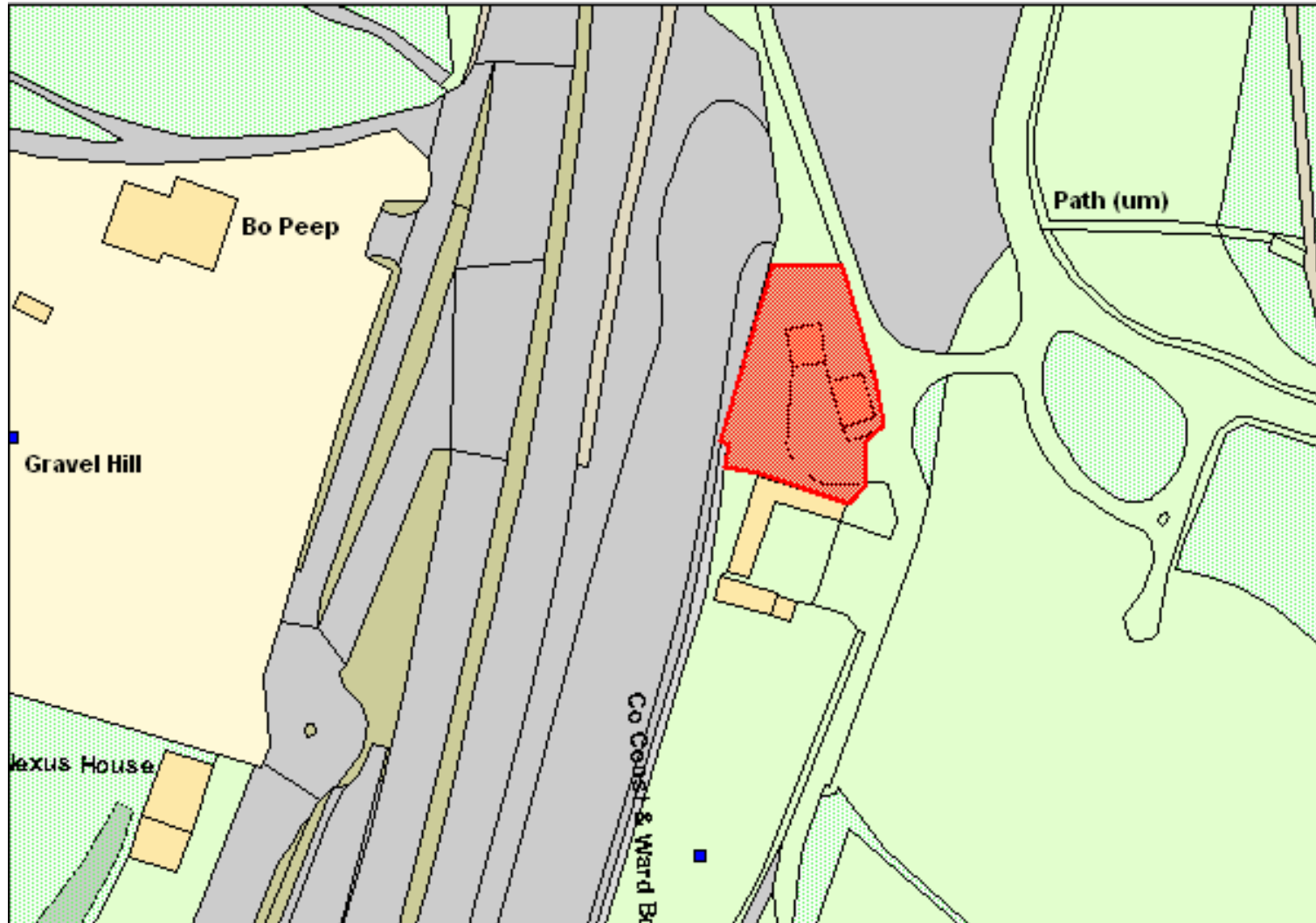
National Planning Policy Framework

Circular 20/10

East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006)

South East Plan 2009

East Hampshire District Council Submission Core Strategy (2012)



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