

Planning Committee May 2023

Application Number: 23/01003/11 Planning Permission

Site: NFDC CAR PARK, THE FURLONG, RINGWOOD BH24 1

Development: Installation of ultra-rapid electric vehicle charging hubs and associated infrastructure

Applicant: MER UK Charging Ltd

Agent: DPP Planning

Target Date: 20/03/2023

Case Officer: Jessica Cooke

Extension Date: 14/04/2023

1 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ISSUES

The key issues are:

- 1) Principle of the development
- 2) Scale, design, materials and impact on the surrounding area
- 3) Parking provision and highway safety
- 4) Amenity Considerations

This application is to be considered by Committee as the car park is a matter for Forest District Council and there is a contrary Town Council view.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to an existing NFDC car park located adjacent to the Furlong in Ringwood.

The site lies adjacent to but outside of the Ringwood Conservation Area.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks planning permission for the installation of 5 Electric Vehicle charging hubs in an existing car park with associated infrastructure to facilitate 9no. electric vehicle charging spaces at the NFDC Furlong. A substation with associated equipment and infrastructure is located to the south west of the parking spaces and these would be enclosed by a close-boarded fence.

The charging points and infrastructure would be located close to the existing car park to the north of the Ringwood Gateway building.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

No relevant planning history

5 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy

Policy STR1: Achieving sustainable development

Policy ENV3: Design quality and local distinctiveness

Policy ECON5: Retail development and other main town centre uses

Policy IMPL2: Development standards

Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management 2014

DM1: Heritage and Conservation

DM4: Renewable and low carbon energy generation

Supplementary Planning Guidance And Documents

SPD - Ringwood Local Distinctiveness

Relevant Advice

NPPF Chap 12: Achieving well designed places

NPPF Chap 14: Meeting the challenge of Climate Change, Flood risk and sea level change.

Constraints

SSSI IRZ Rural Residential

SSSI IRZ Water Supply

SSSI IRZ Waste

SSSI IRZ Minerals Oil and Gas

SSSI IRZ Infrastructure

SSSI IRZ Rural Non Residential

SSSI IRZ Residential

SSSI IRZ Wind and Solar Energy

Archaeological Site

Aerodrome Safeguarding Zone

Planning Agreement

Plan Area

SSSI IRZ Combustion

SSSI IRZ All Consultations

SSSI IRZ Discharges

SSSI IRZ Compost

SSSI IRZ Air Pollution

Avon Catchment Area

Conservation Area: Ringwood Conservation Area

Plan Policy Designations

Employment

Town Centre Boundary

Built-up Area

6 PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ringwood Town Council

R(4) Recommend refusal. The Committee had no objection in principle to the electricity hubs being installed in the car park, but it felt the location was inappropriate and out of keeping and the 2.5 meter high closed-sided fence would be overbearing and visually intrusive. Regard should be given to the entrance of the car park. It was suggested that the northern end of the car park would be a more suitable location, where the compound would not be visible.

Re-consult on amended plans:

Ringwood Town Council

R(4) Recommend refusal. The Committee repeated earlier comments that the amendments to the plans do not make any difference to those already made. There was no objection in principle to additional electricity hubs at the car park, but it felt the location indicated was inappropriate and the 2.5 meter high closed-board fencing would be overbearing and unsightly. Regard should be given also to its proximity to the entrance of the car park. It is suggested that the northern area of the car park would be a more suitable location where the compound would not be quite so visible.

7 COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

No comments received

8 CONSULTEE COMMENTS

The Ringwood Society

It is considered that the development is large, high and visually intrusive as it is in a Conservation Area, and masks the view of the Furlong. The location is in the wrong place and should be moved to a less conspicuous location. If constructed to fit in with the surroundings instead of a bare wall, the proposal fully endorsing more charging points we recommend that this application be refused.

9 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

No representations received.

10 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The proposal is sited within the defined built-up area where the Council has a strong favour of development, subject to material considerations.

The stated Key Issues, Strategic Objectives and policies, within the Local Plan provides a clear promotion and support for the use of renewable energy within sustainable limits and the reduction where possible of vehicular emissions. In addition, guidance provided by the NPPF identifies 'the need to provide adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles'. Furthermore, in the light of the New Forest declaring a climate emergency and its Climate Change Action Plan (February 2023), the provision of charging facilities to promote the use of electric vehicles is encouraged. In such circumstances, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle.

Design, site layout and impact on local character and appearance

The proposal is sited within a large existing car park at The Furlong. The car park is predominantly open in character and is enclosed by a timber fence. The proposed infrastructure and ancillary equipment will be located to the north of the Ringwood Gateway building and lies adjacent to the existing parking area. Opposite the proposal lies a retail development area including the Waitrose car park.

When submitted, the substation and ancillary equipment was proposed to be enclosed by a 2.5m high fence. The Town Council raised an objection of the fence being out of keeping with the area, overbearing an adjacent building. Amended plans have been submitted to reduce the height of the fence by 0.6m to 1.9m. However, the Town Council maintained its objection.

It was additionally suggested by the Town Council that the proposal be moved to an alternative location to the north of the car park where it would be less prominent.

In light of these comments, relocating the proposal to the north of the car park was explored. However, the point of connection to the electricity network would be adjacent to the current proposal, therefore delivering the equipment to the site would require extensive and disruptive cabling across the car park which would subsequently result in the proposal being unviable and unacceptable.

It is accepted that the fencing enclosing the substation and infrastructure would be close to the highway and it would have some visual impact on the highway from this part of the car park. However, there is various paraphernalia such as street lighting and fencing which exist in the vicinity of the application site and the retail development and the visual impacts of the proposal are considered acceptable within this context.

Options to relocate the proposal to a less prominent part of the car park would be viable and in addition, this relocation would make them less prominent. Given this and the wider considerations in respect of the sustainability of the proposal, which are in line with the Council's climate agenda, the proposed proposals are considered acceptable.

Conservation Area impact

The proposal lies adjacent to but outside of the Ringwood Conservation Area. The closest part of the Ringwood Conservation Area comprises retail units and Waitrose car park, whereby there is various paraphernalia such as street lighting, high level palisade fencing and bollards.

By reason of its siting, positioning and orientation in respect of the Conservation Area, any impacts would be limited and would be considered less than substantial harm in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 202 and therefore, this is considered acceptable when weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

On the planning balance, in accordance with the NPPF and having considered all relevant factors, it is concluded that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area by virtue of the provision of sustainable transport facilities.

Highway safety, access and parking

As a consequence of the installation of the proposed EV charging facilities and parking bays, the number of parking spaces within the location would be reduced by 7 parking spaces from 16 parking spaces to 9 parking spaces.

The reduction in parking spaces should be balanced against the benefits of the provision of EV charging facilities within the car park location.

Residential amenity

The EV charging apparatus and equipment is located within an area on the edge of Ringwood Town Centre and is not within close proximity of residential properties. As such, the proposal is not anticipated to have any adverse impacts on residential amenity.

11 CONCLUSION

Having regard to local and national planning policy, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle and the provision of improved infrastructure is supported and is considered to outweigh the benefits to the Conservation Area.

12 RECOMMENDATION

Grant Subject to Conditions

Proposed Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiry of three years from the date of this permission.

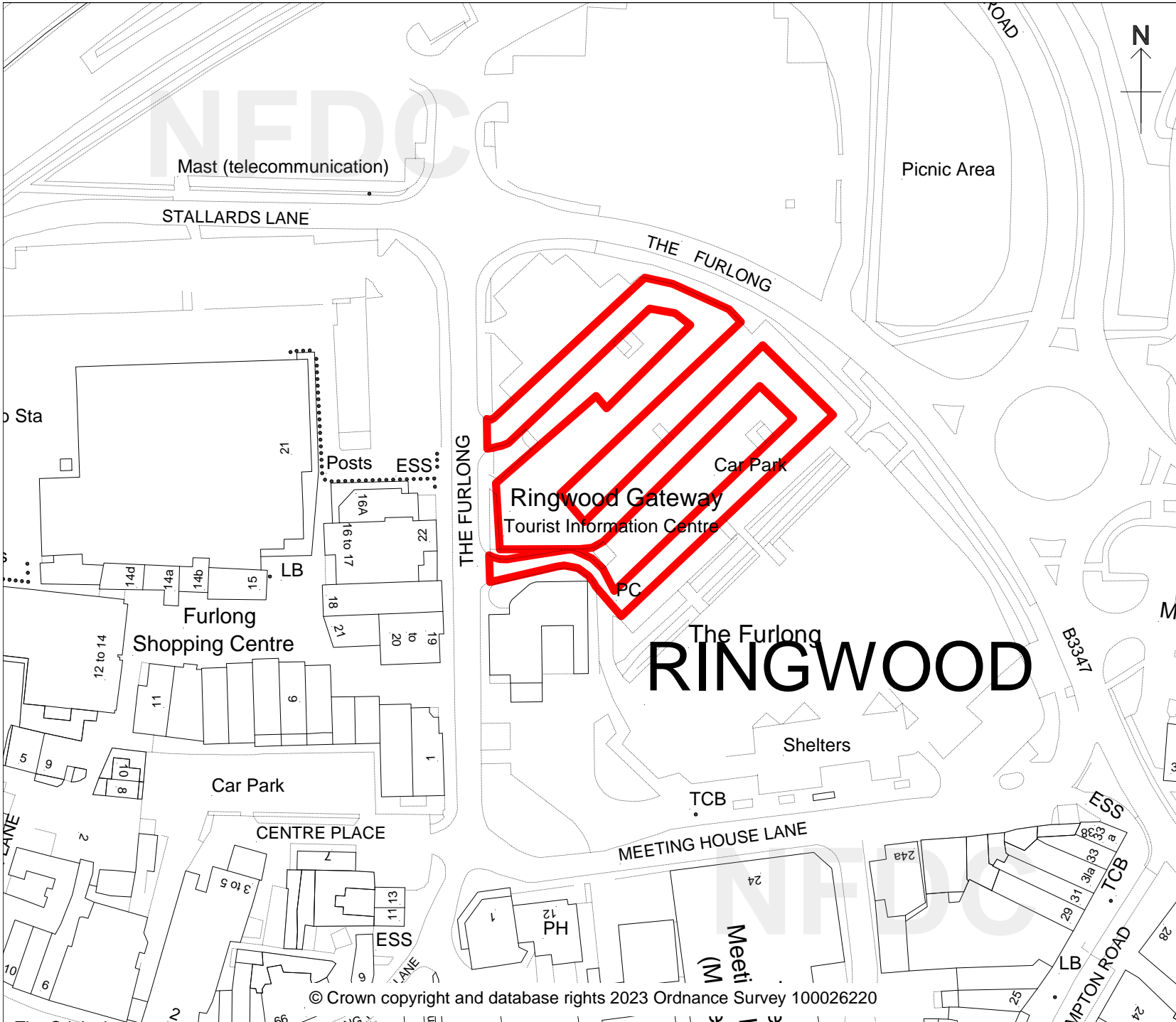
Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- E22-0170-P-004 REV D Elevation Plans
- E22-0170-P-006 Location Plan
- E22-0170-P-007 REV B Planning Existing Plan
- E22-0170-P-008 REV B Proposed Site Plan

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of the development.

Further Information:
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New Forest
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PLANNING COMMITTEE

May 2023

NFDC Car Park
The Furlong
Ringwood
23/10003

Scale 1:1250

N.B. If printing this plan from the internet, it will not be to scale.