

**Application Number: 23/10003** Full Planning Permission

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

**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

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## 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 owned by New 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 5no. ultra-rapid Electric Vehicle charging hubs in an existing car park with associated infrastructure to facilitate 9no. electric vehicle charging spaces at the NFDC Car Park at The Furlong. A substation with associated equipment and infrastructure is proposed to the south west of the parking spaces and these would be enclosed by a 1.9m high close-boarded fence.

The charging points and infrastructure would be located close to the entrance to the 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, Flooding and coastal 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 additional electricity hubs being installed in the car park, but it felt the location indicated was inappropriate and out of keeping and the 2.5 meter high closed-board fencing would be overbearing and visually intrusive. Regard should be given also to its proximity to the entrance of the car park. It was suggested that the northern area of the car park would be a more suitable location, where the compound would not be quite so visible.

Re-consult on amended plans:

### **Ringwood Town Council**

R(4) Recommend refusal. The Committee repeated earlier comments as amendments to the plans do not make any difference to those already submitted. There was no objection in principle to additional electricity hubs being installed in the car park, but it felt the location indicated was inappropriate and out of keeping and the 2.5 meter high closed-board fencing would be overbearing and visually intrusive. Regard should be given also to its proximity to the entrance of the car park. It was 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 obtrusive, especially as it is in a Conservation Area, and masks the view of the Furlong. We submit that it is in the wrong place and should be moved to a less conspicuous location and constructed to fit in with the surroundings instead of a bare wooden fence . Whilst fully endorsing more charging points we recommend that this application is refused

## **9 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

No representations received.

## **10 PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

### Principle of Development

The proposal is sited within the defined built-up area where there is a presumption in 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 resources within sustainable limits and the reduction where possible of vehicular emissions. In addition, guidance provided by the NPPF identifies 'the need to ensure an 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 Change emergency and its Climate Change Action Plan (February 2023), the provision of charging facilities to promote the use of electric vehicles is encouraged and as such, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle.

### Design, site layout and impact on local character and appearance of area

The proposal is sited within a large existing car park at The Furlong in Ringwood. The car park is predominantly open in character and is enclosed by a post and rail timber fence. . The proposed infrastructure and ancillary equipment would be sited north of the Ringwood Gateway building and lies adjacent to the entrance to the car parking area. Opposite the proposal lies a retail development at The Furlong, 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 to the height of the fence being out of keeping with the area, overbearing and visually intrusive. Amended plans have been submitted to reduce the height of the close-boarded fence by 0.6m to 1.9m. However, the Town Council maintained their objection.

It was additionally suggested by the Town Council that the proposal was moved to an alternative location to the north of the car park where it would not be as visible.

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 is located adjacent to the current proposal, therefore delivering the equipment to the north of the site would require extensive and disruptive cabling across the car park and would subsequently result in the proposal being unviable and undeliverable.

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 open character of this part of the car park. However, there is various paraphernalia and high level walls and fencing which exist in the vicinity of the application site and in association with the retail development and the visual impacts of the proposal need to be considered within this context.

Options to relocate the proposal to a less prominent part of the car park would not be viable and in addition, this relocation would make them less visible to customers. Given this and the wider considerations in respect of the sustainability benefits of the proposal, which are in line with the Council's climate agenda, the visual impact of the 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 development and Waitrose car park, whereby there is various paraphernalia such as bike shelters, 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 harm should be 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 proposed electric vehicle charging points outweighs the less than substantial harm that may result to the Conservation Area by virtue of the provision of sustainable energy and transport.

#### Highway safety, access and parking

As a consequence of the installation of the proposed EV charging equipment and parking bays, the number of parking spaces within the location of the proposal 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 clear sustainable benefits of the provision of EV charging facilities within the car park in an accessible location.

## Residential amenity

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

## **11 CONCLUSION**

Having regard to local and national planning policy, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle and the provision of improved electric charging infrastructure is supported and is considered to outweigh the very minor impact upon the Conservation Area.

## **12 RECOMMENDATION**

### **Grant Subject to Conditions**

#### **Proposed Conditions:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration 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:

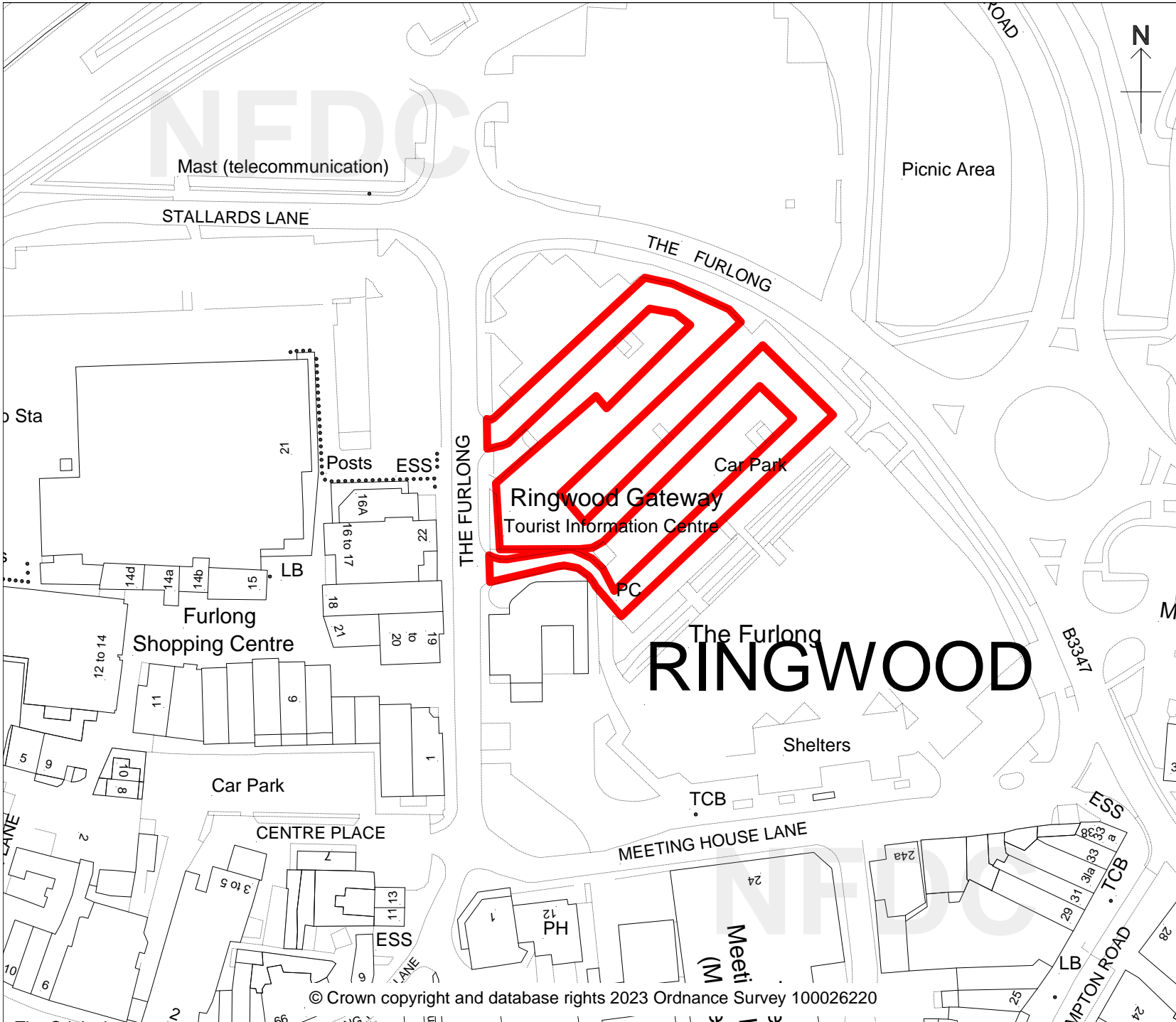
- E22-0170-P-004 REV D Elevation Plans
- E22-0170-P-006 Location Plan
- E22-0170-P-007 REV B Planning Existing Plan
- E22-0170-P-008 REV B Proposed Site Plan

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of the development.

#### **Further Information:**

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**New Forest**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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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.