

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
Officer Recommendation:	Grant Subject to Conditions
Reason for Referral to Committee:	1) Parish Council Contrary View 2) Applicant is NFDC

UPDATE REPORT TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members will recall that this application was previously considered at the May 2023 Planning Committee.

The original Officer Report is set out in full at the end of this Update Report which described and assessed all of the main planning considerations for this application.

May 2023 Committee

Members expressed concerns about the location of the Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) and associated infrastructure. The agent advised during the Committee that the applicant had explored alternative locations within the car park. However, it was not viable to move the location of the scheme, given the requirement to connect to the existing substation and the extensive cabling involved with moving the scheme. This would result in the scheme being undeliverable in a different location to that proposed on the application site. However, Members voted to defer the application so that alternative locations could be explored.

Post May 2023 Committee actions and developments

In order to respond to the issues raised by Members, the applicant and agent explored the alternative location to the north of the car park, as suggested by Ringwood Town Council and undertook a viability assessment for the financial costs of running cables across the car park. The *additional* costs of moving the EV charging points and associated infrastructure to the northern side of the car park would be an extra £62,242 and the scheme would not be viable in this instance.

Ringwood Town Council

The Committee agreed NOT to amend its observation and recommended refusal of the application (R4).

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 closedboard 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.

Assessment

For clarification on the above comments, RTC's objection makes reference to a 2.5m high fence, however, the height of the fence was reduced to 1.9m in height during the course of the original application and the Town Council were reconsulted on this at this time.

Officers maintain that whilst it is accepted the fencing which encloses the infrastructure would be close to the highway and would have some visual impacts on the open character of the car park, there are already various paraphernalia and built form in its vicinity and the application has been assessed within the existing context.

Additionally, the site lies outside of the Conservation Area. Although the site is adjacent to the part of Conservation Area comprising Waitrose car park there are limited visual impacts of the proposal on this part of the Conservation Area which would amount to 'less than substantial harm' as per paragraph 202 of the NPPF whereby this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The applicant is undertaking this proposal on behalf of NFDC under the Hampshire County Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Point Southern Regional Framework which seeks to improve and increase publicly available charging points across Hampshire and the South of England. There are significant environmental benefits to electric vehicles, such as zero emissions whilst running, reduced air pollution and decreased dependence on fossil fuels, which are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change. As such, the public benefits of the scheme are considerable and outweigh any potential 'less than substantial harm' to the Conservation Area.

It is pertinent to note that the financial information submitted by the applicant/agent demonstrates that moving the location of the proposal would create additional costs of £62,242 and as a result of this the proposal would be unviable and undeliverable. This would result in the applicant withdrawing from the scheme which would have implications on delivering the HCC Southern Regional Framework for increasing EV charging points across the County. Additionally, moving the proposal to the north of the car park would result in the requirement to dig up the road surface across the car park, which could result in implications for the use of the NFDC car park and its subsequent revenue.

Conclusion

Officers carefully considered the concerns raised by Members at the May Planning Committee however, officers consider the proposed development would not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area. Any visual impacts of the proposal on the adjacent Conservation Area and Waitrose car park would be limited and, in accordance with the NPPF, 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. These public benefits being the provision of sustainable energy and transport in line with NFDC's sustainability initiatives and Hampshire County Council's Southern Regional Framework for the provision of EVCP. The recommendation therefore remains one of approval subject to conditions.

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORT - MAY 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 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:

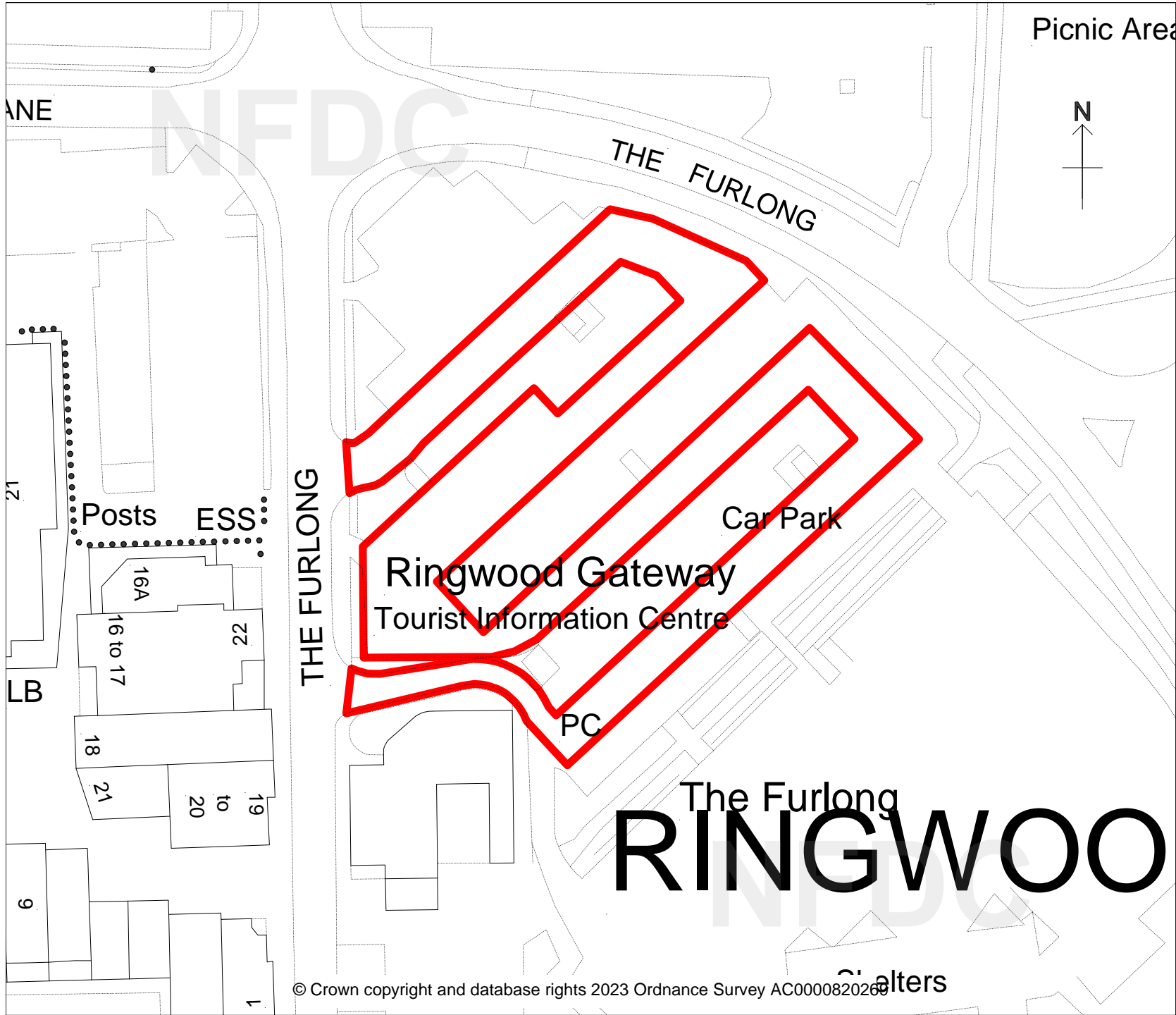
- E22-0170-P-004 REV D Elevation Plans
- E22-0170-P-006 Location Plan
- E22-0170-P-007 REV B Planning Existing Plan
- E22-0170-P-008 REV B Proposed Site Plan

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of the development.

Further Information:

Jessica Cooke

Telephone: 02380285909



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tel: 023 8028 5000
www.newforest.gov.uk

David Norris
Service Manager
Development Management
New Forest District Council
Appletree Court
Lyndhurst
SO43 7PA

PLANNING COMMITTEE

September 2023

NFDC Car Park
The Furlong
Ringwood
23/10003

Scale 1:750

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