

Application Number: 26/10209 Reg 3 Council's Own Development
Site: NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL DEPOT, 169-171
CHRISTCHURCH ROAD, RINGWOOD BH24 3AN
Development: Modular Portakabin for office & welfare accommodation
Applicant: New Forest District Council
Agent:
Target Date: 27/04/2026
Case Officer: Sophie Tagg
Officer Recommendation: Grant Subject to Conditions
Reason for Referral to Committee: Contrary to Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan: Policy R10.

1 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ISSUES

The key issues are:

- 1) Principle of development
- 2) Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- 3) Impact on highway safety
- 4) Impact on amenity
- 5) Sustainability and Ecology
- 6) Healthy and safe communities

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The depot is located on the south western corner of the industrial estate bound by Christchurch Road to the west, with residential uses fronting the road opposite the site and Wellworthy Way to the north. Beyond the eastern boundary are other employment buildings and to the south are the residential dwellings in Willow Drive. The site is enclosed by palisade fencing with established and mature planting on the outer edge of that fence. Given the relatively low level nature and simple form of the temporary buildings on the site the site is not intrusive in the street scene in its existing arrangement.

Works relating to the proposal have commenced on site which includes the formation of the foundations for the portacabin building.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application specifically seeks permission for a replacement single storey building (comprising 2no linked portacabins) located close to the northern boundary of the site providing welfare facilities for employees.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

None directly relevant

5 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy

Policy STR1: Achieving sustainable development
Policy STR3: The strategy for locating new development
Policy STR6: Sustainable economic growth
Policy ENV1: Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites
Policy ENV3: Design quality and local distinctiveness
Policy ENV4: Landscape character and quality
Policy ECON1: Employment land and development
Policy ECON2: Retention of employment sites and consideration of alternative uses
Policy CCC1: Safe and healthy communities
Policy IMPL1: Developer contributions
Policy IMPL2: Development standards

Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management 2014

Policy DM2 Nature conservation, biodiversity and geodiversity
Policy DM5 Contaminated land
RING1: Land east of Christchurch Road - employment land allocation

Core Strategy (Saved Policy)

CS17: Employment and economic development

Supplementary Planning Guidance And Documents

SPD - Parking Standards
SPD - Air Quality in New Development. Adopted June 2022

SPD - Planning for Climate change

Neighbourhood Plan

Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan

Policy R1: A Spatial Plan for Ringwood
Policy R7: The Ringwood Design Code
Policy R10: Zero Carbon Buildings

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Guidance

6 PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ringwood Town Council

P(1) Recommend permission, but would accept the Planning Officer's decision.

7 COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

No comments received

8 CONSULTEE COMMENTS

Comments have been received from the following consultees:

NFDC Trees:

No objection

NFDC Environmental Health (Contaminated land) ;

No objection

9 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

None Received

10 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The Council's strategy for sustainable economic growth seeks to deliver a vibrant and prosperous economy across a range of employment opportunities. Policy STR6 of the Local Plan Part 1 sets out the strategic policy for sustainable economic growth.

The depot site forms part of a wider employment park facilitated by policy RING1 of the Local Plan Part 2 and this policy flowed on from policy CS17 of the Core Strategy. Policy CS17 is a 'saved' policy of the Core Strategy and criterion c) of the policy specifically enables the "...*redevelopment and intensification of employment sites particularly those sites located within the main towns and those with good access by a variety of transport modes*".

Policy ECON2 of the Local Plan Part 1 seeks to retain employment sites that remain suitable for continued employment use wherever possible. In this case the proposal does not seek to change the use of the land at the depot site to an alternative employment use, it is a reconfiguration and upgrade of the site to meet modern day working conditions given the current condition of the existing built form on the site.

The principle for the development is therefore acceptable in policy terms, subject to the consideration of other relevant material considerations.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

The proposed development comprises a 2no linked portacabins that are steel clad in a goosewing grey colour and there is limited or no scope to modify the appearance, form, or materials of the portacabin beyond standard manufacturer specifications.

Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan requires good design and attention to local distinctiveness. Policy ENV3 specifically seeks development to:

"Create buildings, streets and spaces which are sympathetic to the environment and their context in terms of layout, landscape, scale, height, appearance and density and in relationship to adjoining buildings, spaces and landscape features".

The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan places emphasis on high quality, distinctive development and references design guidance and codes – specifically policy R7. The depot is located on the south western corner of the industrial estate bound by Christchurch Road to the west, with residential uses fronting the road opposite the site and Wellworthy Way to the north. Beyond the eastern boundary are other

employment buildings and to the south are the residential dwellings in Willow Drive. The site is enclosed by palisade fencing with established and mature planting and trees on the outer edge of that fence. Given the relatively low level nature and simple form of the buildings that were on the site, the site is not intrusive in the street scene. The existing buildings that were on the site were at the end of their usable life. These were also single storey and temporary in nature. When viewed from the road the buildings also appeared tired and a little scruffy.

The site is also often dominated more by the parked fleet of vehicles that operate out of the depot and at certain times of the day, the parked vehicles have more of an impact on the local character than the buildings themselves.

The replacement building, whilst temporary in nature, would be brand new from the factory. The finish and appearance would, therefore, be a notable improvement on the existing buildings. Whilst the building is utilitarian such a building is not alien to the application site and along side the northern edge of the site (adjacent to Wellworthy Way) the context for the development is the built form in the industrial estate. The closest building due north is the Lidl foodstore, which itself is of a simple and functional design and appearance. It is considered that the proposal will result in a building that, whilst temporary in form, will be sympathetic to the environment and its context in terms of layout scale, height and appearance. It will be an improvement over the previously sited buildings on the site.

The Council's Tree Officer has been consulted in respect of the impact to trees on the northern and western boundaries of the site. There is a linear row of trees growing on the northern and western boundaries. TPO 49/96/1 applies to a number of the existing trees, mainly mature Scots pine. The application provides a tree survey by NFDC Corporate Trees, although this survey doesn't provide details on the trees in terms of their condition or quality it simply lists the species and plots them on a plan. The trees potentially affected by the foundations are the sycamores growing at the eastern end of the northern boundary. These sycamores grow on a raised bank that appears to be made up ground. Excavation into the bank has taken place to re-profile it, however in view of the ground being made up the Tree Officer does not consider this has resulted in a negative impact on the trees. The sycamores are not individually covered by the TPO. The trees do overhang the site to a degree but the proposed Portacabin is single storey and unlikely to conflict with any low overhanging branches. The Tree Officer has suggested that given this is an NFDC application, and the trees are council owned and managed that the trees are assessed and inspected post construction completion by the NFDC Corporate Tree Team and they can advise the applicant on any remedial works that may be required. A planning informative has been added in this regard.

The siting is acceptable in relationship to adjoining buildings, spaces and landscape features and within a controlled operational depot environment and would accord with the requirements of policy ENV3.

Impact on highway safety

Policy ENV3 requires development proposals to be "... safe and easy to navigate" (part ii) and to ensure that there is suitable parking so as to not prejudice the character of safety of the street network (part iii).

Since the proposal represents a replacement rather than new operational development:

- no intensification of vehicle movements is anticipated;
- no changes to the existing access onto Christchurch Road are required; and
- internal depot circulation should remain broadly unaffected.

On this basis, given the increased size of the welfare facilities would not obstruct manoeuvring within the site, the new building is not considered to give rise to any highway safety issues and HCC Highways has not been consulted.

Policy R1 of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan sets out the Neighbourhood Plan's vision to focus new development on brownfield first and other opportunities within the settlement boundary utilising to reduce the need for Green Belt releases and to restore and strengthen Ringwood's status as a chartered market town. The policy seeks to tackle the effects of traffic congestion through the effective promotion of means of travel other than the car including the delivery of walking and cycling measures to better connect the new communities at Moortown Lane and off Hightown Road. It is considered that the proposals would accord with policy ENV3 and Policy R1 by providing cycle parking to facilitate travel by modes, other than the car, and it is noted that there are bus routes along Christchurch Road with access onto the town centre.

Impact on amenity

Criterion ii) of policy ENV3 seek to:

“Avoid unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion or overbearing impact, overlooking, shading, noise and light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character or residential amenity”.

It is noted that the siting of the proposed building is towards the northern most boundary. This is almost the furthest point on the site from the nearest residential property in Willow Drive to the south. The external lighting would comprise 2no. overdoor exit lamps and LED emergency lights located adjacent to the two entrances. It is not considered that the replacement building will give rise to a significant increase in noise, overlooking, overshadowing or light pollution to neighbouring properties. The primary use of the site remains as a depot. The building facilitates the operations with support services, welfare and amenities for the staff on site. This part of the site operations are not considered to give rise to unacceptable neighbouring impacts contrary to policy ENV3.

Sustainability and Ecology

The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan promotes sustainability and biodiversity enhancements. Neighbourhood Plan Policy R10: “Zero Carbon Buildings” requires all developments to be zero carbon ready. The policy is comprised of five parts. The policy states (in summary) that:

- a) All development should be zero carbon ready by design to minimise the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings through land form, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping.
- b) Where feasible development should be certified Passivhaus or equivalent standards should be applied.
- c) Requires Certification of the Passivhaus standard but only if b) applies
- d) Is applicable for Major applications – of which the proposal is not
- e) Requires the submission of a Climate Change Statement.

It is commendable that the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to improve the sustainable nature of construction across its plan area through policy R10 and given that this Council has also declared a Climate and Wildlife Emergency, this policy should be afforded significant weight.

Policy IMPL2 of the Local Plan part 1 seeks a BREEAM excellent construction standard from new commercial development on developments greater than 250sq.m. The proposed floor area falls short of the threshold in IMPL2 so there is no requirement to meet the BREEAM excellent standard. This policy seeks to ensure that sustainable measures are incorporated within the design process. This is supported by the provisions of ENV3(v) which require the considering of sustainable resilience measures as part of all development.

The proposed development has been assessed against the requirements of Policy R10 of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan. While the proposal cannot achieve full compliance with these requirements, the submitted design does include measures that improve fabric efficiency, modern methods of construction, and a building form that could support future installation of low carbon systems should longer term certainty be established.

It is also necessary to consider the extent of policy compliance in the context of the operational and tenure constraints that apply to the site. The applicant has confirmed that the depot occupies land leased from Hampshire County Council, and the remaining lease term, combined with the wider uncertainty associated with Local Government Reorganisation, significantly limits the ability to commit to investment in long life zero carbon infrastructure.

Given these circumstances, the Applicant has adopted a proportionate approach that delivers necessary operational improvements while incorporating sustainable elements where reasonably achievable. The existing depot accommodation is insufficient in terms of capacity and falls below modern expectations for staff welfare and operational functionality. Continued use of the existing facilities is not viable. The proposed building therefore provides an essential interim solution that will materially improve welfare provision and operational resilience, while still securing identifiable environmental gains relative to the current accommodation.

Although the proposal does not fully satisfy the specific technical requirements of Policy R10, based on the above a departure from this policy is considered justified.

A bio-diversity metric has been submitted to meet the national validation requirements pursuant to Biodiversity net gain. There is no formal biodiversity net gain requirement expected for a temporary building on an existing operational site. Local Plan policies seek to secure biodiversity enhancements from development and the application has given consideration to the provision of enhancement features that could be incorporated into the development such as the installation of bat and bird boxes. A biodiversity enhancement plan can be secured via a condition.

Healthy and safe communities

In terms of land contamination, the application is supported by a Phase 2 Site Investigation Report dated December 2025, undertaken by Solmek. The report concludes that given the site's proposed commercial land use, the levels of contamination recorded on site are unlikely pose a risk to the current and future users of the site.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has provided comments which confirm that there is no objection subject to a condition to ensure that any potential contamination that could pose risks to human health and/or the environment found during the proposed development on this site will be dealt with in accordance with the Environment Agency's technical guidance.

11 CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The application has been considered against all relevant material considerations including the development plan, relevant legislation, policy guidance, government advice, and responses received from consultees.

The proposed development is considered to broadly accord with the wider development plan objectives and complies with the Plan other than the conflict identified with policy R10 of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan. It is, as set out above, considered that a fully R10 compliant scheme cannot be delivered on the site by this application given the pressing need for the building on site to replace the current old and unsuitable buildings. The need for an updated building on the site to replace the existing, poor quality buildings and ensure that the Council Depot remains operational is afforded significant weight in the decision making process to outweigh the conflict with policy R10. The application is, therefore, on balance, recommended for approval.

12. RECOMMENDATION

Grant Subject to Conditions

Proposed Conditions:

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

Concept Layout, Drawing No. SK01 Rev D, Dated May 2023
Elevations, Drawing No. 10 Rev C, Dated 8 September 2025
Floorplan/Fire Strategy, Drawing No. 10 Rev G Dated 8 September 2025
Location Plan Dated 27 February 2026
Foundation Details Drawing No. 100 Rev B Dated 30 January 2026
Drainage Layout Drawing No. 120 Rev E Dated 04 February 2026

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of the development.

2. Prior to occupation, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan providing details of ecological enhancements to be carried out on the development site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The ecological enhancements shall be provided before the building hereby approved is occupied and retained/maintained in place to provide biodiversity and protection thereafter.

Reason: To enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site in accordance with Policy DM2 of the Local Plan Part2: Sites and Development Management.

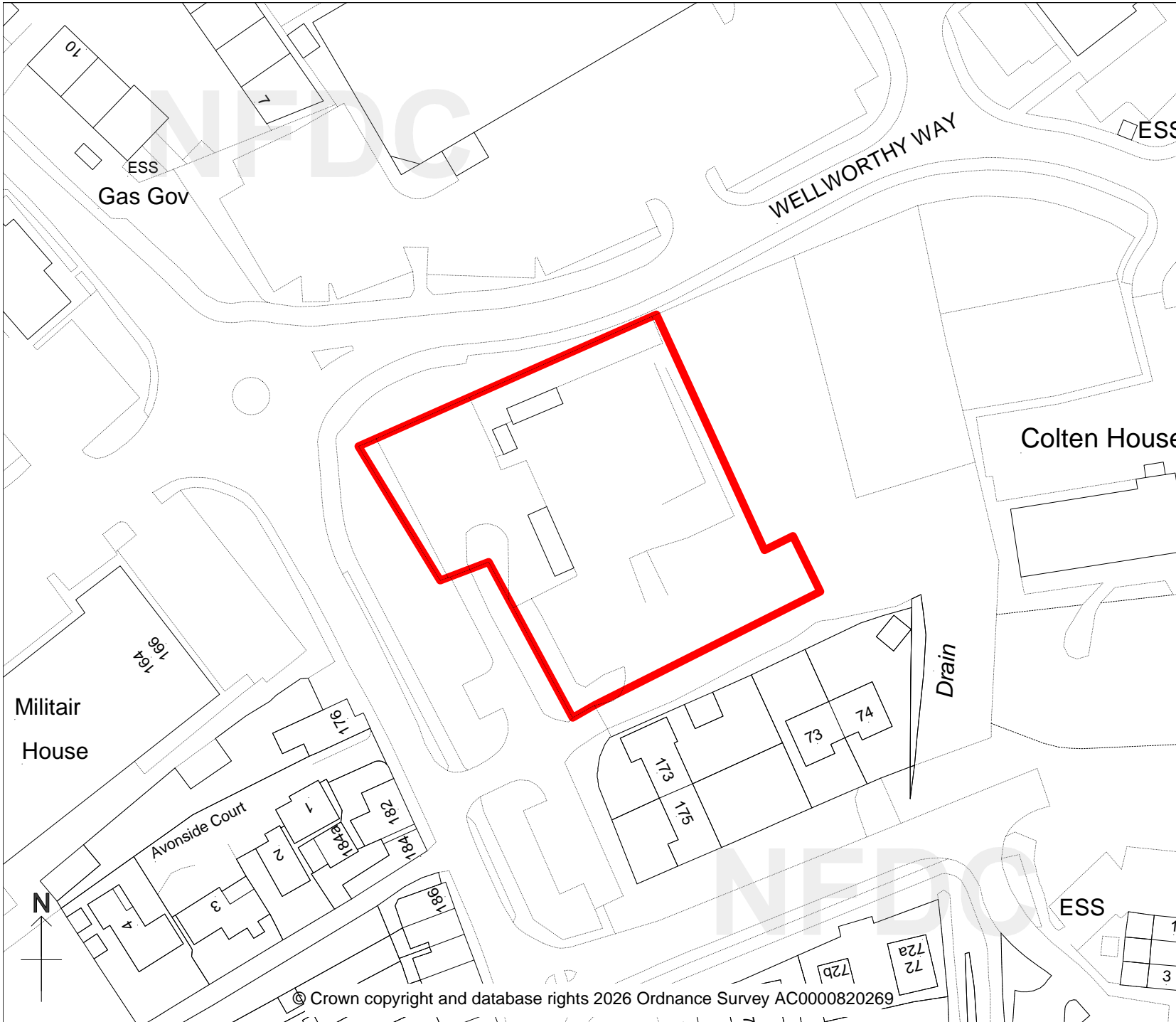
3. If unexpected contamination is found after development has begun, development must be halted on that part of the site affected by the unexpected contamination to the extent specified by the Local Planning Authority in writing, until an investigation and risk assessment has been undertaken in accordance with Environment Agency's technical Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance. Where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be prepared to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historical environment must be prepared, and is subject to the approval in writing of the [Local] Planning Authority. The scheme must include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme must ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme, a verification report that demonstrates the effectiveness of the remediation carried out must be produced, and is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors in accordance with Policy CCC1 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside the National Park.

Further Information:

Sophie Tagg

Telephone: 023 8028 5439



New Forest

DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Mark Wyatt
 Service Manager
 Development Management
 New Forest District Council
 Appletree Court
 Lyndhurst
 SO43 7PA

PLANNING COMMITTEE

April 2026

New Forest District Council
 169-171 Christchurch Road
 Ringwood
 26/10209

Scale 1:1000

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