

OFFICER REPORT FOR COMMITTEE

DATE: 14/06/2023

**P/22/1655/FP
MESSRS T & J HAMBLÉN**

**PORTCHESTER WEST WARD
IAN JUDD AND PARTNERS**

AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO BE USED AS A GRAIN STORE

LAND WEST OF DOWNEND ROAD, FAREHAM, PO16 8PX

Report By

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This application is being reported to the Planning Committee for determination due to the number of third-party representations received.

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1. This application relates to the corner of a 1 hectare agricultural field.
- 2.2. The parcel of land where the development is proposed is a triangular parcel of land, with hedgerow boundaries. The site lies to the immediate west of Downend Road, to the northern side of the M27 motorway and to the south of the private haul road used by waste transfer vehicles.
- 2.3. At the times the Planning Case Officer conducted their site visits it appeared the site was used as a grazing paddock, but no animals were in the field.
- 2.4. The surrounding area is predominantly rural in character. The site slopes down to the south, however remains approximately 1.5metres (m) higher than Downend Road, which is situated immediately to the east.
- 2.5. There are horse grazing fields on the eastern side of Downend Road with a waste transfer station beyond. To the north there is a private haul road which carries commercial vehicles from Junction 11 through to the waste transfer station. To the north and west of the haul road are further agricultural fields. The southern boundary abuts the tree lined M27 embankment. To the south of the M27 is a field which has been safeguarded in the Fareham Local Plan 2037 as a housing allocation site for approximately 550 houses (Policy HA56).
- 2.6. The eastern boundary of the site is a non-statutory designated site (Down End Road Verge Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and Road Verge of Ecological Importance) for supporting chalk grassland.

- 2.7. There is a general footpath along part of Downend Road, and the long-distance walking route of The Allan King Way footpath runs adjacent to the site (linking Portchester to Winchester) no other public rights of way look over the site.

3.0 *Description of Proposal*

- 3.1. The application is to construct an agricultural barn to be used as a grain store. The proposal would replace the existing grain store on the applicant's holding at Winnham Farm to the east of Downend Road, which is due to be demolished, to enable the erection of 350 dwellings (granted outline planning permission under P/20/0912/OA).
- 3.2. The farm uses approximately 121 hectares of land for arable farming, rotating winter wheat, spring wheat, winter oats and field beans. There are approximately 69 hectares (170 acres) of land in Fareham and 65 hectares (160 acres) of land in Wickham. In 2023, the applicant has forecast a harvest of 775 tonnes of wheat and 600 tonnes of barley. The land indicated on the submitted occupation plan at Wickham is not suitable for HGVs to access to unload the grain. The application site is the most appropriate site central to the farming operation.
- 3.3. The proposed agricultural building would be a steel portal frame construction with fibre cement roof sheets and used to store grain.
- 3.4. The building would measure 24.38m (80ft.) in length by 18.28m (60ft.) in width with an eaves height of 6.1m (20ft.) and a ridge height of 8.98m (29.5ft.). The gross floor area of the building will be 446msq (4,800 sqft).
- 3.5. The finish will be pre-cast concrete panel grain walling to 3m above ground level (on three sides of the building) with juniper green box profile cladding from the top of the concrete panel walling to the underside of the roof. There will be two galvanised roller shutter doors in the north-east elevation with a central steel pedestrian door. The concrete panel grain walling on this elevation will be to a height of 2m above ground level with box profile cladding above.
- 3.6. The grain store would be located approximately 25 metres from the side of Downend Road. The entrance to the site is in the highest corner of the site, the north-east corner where there is an existing field gate. A 75m stoned access track, topped with road planings would be constructed across the field to access the barn, along with an 18.2m by 6.1m concrete apron in front of the barn to allow for grain to be unloaded.

- 3.7. The application includes a Landscape and Biodiversity Implementation and Management Plan. The Plan demonstrated that the scheme will provide an extensive 15m deep landscape buffer along the length of the field boundary with Downend Road, screening the barn, both in the short term and long term and also to help improve biodiversity and habitats on the site. The first 5m depth (adjacent to the existing field boundary hedge with Downend Road) will be a mix of native hedging planting (hawthorn, blackthorn, hornbeam, field maple, crab apple, dog rose and hazel), the other 10m depth will be native trees, including whitebeam, horse chestnut, hornbeam, cherry, and hornbeam. Trees will be a standard size, planted at 5m spacing, with a girth of 8-10cm being 2.5-3m in height. In addition to the landscape planting a Barn Owl box, four small bird boxes and 4 bat boxes will also be installed.

4.0 Policies

- 4.1. The following policies apply to this application:

Fareham Local Plan 2037

DS1: Development in the Countryside
DS3: Landscape – Areas of Special Landscape Quality
NE1: Protection of Nature Conservation, Biodiversity and the Local Ecological Network
NE2: Biodiversity Net Gain
NE6: Trees Woodland and Hedgerows
TIN2: Highway Safety and Road Network
D1: High Quality Design and Placemaking
D2: Ensuring Good Environmental Conditions.
HE1: Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
HE4: Archaeology

Other Documents:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021
Fareham Borough Design Guidance: Supplementary Planning Document (excluding Welborne) December 2015

5.0 Relevant Planning History

- 5.1. The following planning history is relevant:

P/21/1865/PA	Agricultural Barn (Grain store)
Prior Approval Refused	16 December 2021
P/22/0825/PA	Agricultural barn
Prior Approval Refused	06 July 2022

- 5.2. The previous Agricultural Prior Approval applications were refused due to the proposed not complying with the General Permitted Development Order requirements for Agricultural Development. Additionally under the Prior Approval procedure Officers were not satisfied with the information submitted, in terms of the siting, design and external appearance of the building. The screening was not substantial enough for the proposed to not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area in terms of the siting, design and external appearance of the building. Therefore Prior Approval was refused, and an application was required to fully assess and control the impact of the proposed.

6.0 Representations

- 6.1. During the consultation period, 11 letters of objection were received from 7 different addresses, raising the following points:

- Out of keeping with the surrounding area
- Rural countryside site with long views over the landscape
- Scale of the barn is huge – colour and planting will not disguise it
- Computer images of landscape make it appear idealistic
- Planting should be native and suit chalk soil
- Planting will take years to develop
- Already significant traffic and accidents on Downend Road
- Does application have access rights over the private road
- Third attempt to building on this site
- Other land holdings elsewhere more suitable
- Should have considered implication of selling Winnham Farm site, and longer term other land will be built on so no need for the barn
- Grain storage creates noise
- A lot of concrete on a greenfield site

7.0 Consultations

EXTERNAL

Ecology – Hampshire County Council

- 7.1 Planting needs to be suited for chalk soils and not impact notable habitats or protected species. Planting measures and wildlife features are positive and if there is a planning requirement due to visual impact, then no further comments to make.

County Archaeologist – Hampshire County Council

- 7.2 Concerns about the setting of Fort Nelson a Scheduled Ancient Monument, however no comments raised on archaeology.

Hampshire Highways – Hampshire County Council

- 7.3 Satisfied that the development would have no detrimental impact on highway safety or operation. A recommendation of no objection is given.

INTERNAL

Tree Officer

- 7.4 Raise no objections or reason for refusal on arboricultural grounds.

Conservation Planner

- 7.5 Maintaining the visibility between the different forts is an intrinsic part of their original design and forms an important part of their overall function. The proposed does not interrupt the current visual relationship between the forts or further erode the character, setting and understanding of them, therefore no objections raised on these grounds.
- 7.6 As there are no other listed properties within the vicinity of the application site and as the site is not located within a Conservation Area, there are no other objections to the current proposals in Historic Environment policy terms.

8.0 Planning Considerations

- 8.1. The following matters represent the key material planning considerations which need to be assessed to determine the suitability of the development proposal. The key issues comprise:
- a) Principle of development
 - b) Impact upon character and appearance of the area
 - c) Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain
 - d) Historic environment
 - e) Highways
- 8.2. a) Principle of development
- 8.2. The NPPF states that planning should recognise the wider benefits from the countryside including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Further, footnote 58 in the NPPF outlines that 'where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality'.
- 8.3. The application site is located within the designated Countryside as identified by Policy DS1 (Development Outside Settlements) which states that development in the countryside will be supported where the proposal can demonstrate a requirement for a location outside of the urban area (i). In addition, proposals need to demonstrate that they protect and enhance the landscape (j) recognise the intrinsic character of the countryside and do not significantly affect the integrity of a Strategic Gap (k) and demonstrate the preference of the development of poorer quality agricultural land (m).

- 8.4. The principle of farming and its supporting infrastructure is considered rural in nature and typically located outside of the urban area. Due to the scale of space required for arable farming and the type and scale of agricultural vehicles required to access the proposed barn, a countryside location would be appropriate for this development.
- 8.5. The proposal is for the construction of a large barn which will provide a central, well accessed grain storage for the agricultural holding, between the 65 hectares farmed in Fareham and 65 hectares in Wickham. It is noted on the farm occupation plan that the applicant does not own all the land they are farming, however all tenanted fields have a Farm Business Tenancies, Agricultural Holding Act Tenancies and contract farming arrangements on, with rolling 12month tenancies and the applicant has farmed these fields for over 20 years. It is also noted that some of the fields farmed under this agricultural holding are allocated sites within the Fareham Local Plan 2037 or have outline planning permission. However, it will be several years until development commences on the allocated sites (if at all) and the land needs to be farmed in the interim.
- 8.6. Having regard to the countryside location any alternative use other than agricultural would be subject to further consideration through the formal planning application process. It is accepted that the 1-hectare field and its topography is too small to suit modern crop farming and alternative fields owned in Wickham are unsuitable for a grain store due to unsuitable access for the HGVs required to load the grain. This central unusable site in the farms portfolio, along with the loss of the existing barn site as a result of the residential development east of Downend Road, means that this site is considered a suitable location and complies with points (i) and (m) of Policy DS1. A planning condition will be imposed to ensure that the barn is solely used for purposes associated with the agricultural holding.

b) Impact to character and appearance of the area

- 8.7. Policy D1 (High Quality Design and Place Making) states that all new development should be of high quality, based on the principles of urban design and sustainability to ensure the creation of well designed, beautiful and safe quality places.
- 8.8. Policy DS3 (Landscape) highlights that in locations designated as Areas of Special Landscape Quality, such as this site, development proposals shall only be permitted where the landscape will be protected and enhanced. Natural landscape features and visual setting (including key views) should be carefully considered.

- 8.9. The barn would be large in scale however, it would be similar in appearance to other agricultural style buildings and is coloured green to help blend in with the backdrop of the trees along the motorway. The proposed landscaping buffer is 15m deep and wraps around the natural curvature of the field boundary and road, helping to screen the proposed building from the north of the site and coming down Downend Road/Portsdown Hill. Existing vegetation on the eastern side of Downend Road limit views of the site until in close proximity. Further, having regard for its intended use, to provide a central storage barn for the farm, it is considered to be of a suitable scale and appearance given the edge of settlement location and the character of the surrounding area with other large buildings outside settlement boundaries and adjacent to the motorway.
- 8.10. Officers have carefully considered the short and long term visual impacts of the proposed building, and in particular any views looking southwest as you travel along Portsdown Hill/Downend Road. Similarly, the applicant has prepared landscape cross sections demonstrating the extent of the impact, assuming a number of years of growth. Walking down from Fort Nelson on the footpath on the other side of the road to the field, the corner of the field where the barn is proposed does not become visible until rounding the bend with the small copse of trees and private access road. Additionally, walking up the hill from the south the site is screened by the motorway embankment and vegetation. When passing the site on the only footpath on the eastern side of the road to the site, the barn will be situated behind a 15m landscape buffer and set above the footpath.
- 8.11. The site is set approximately 1.5m above Downend Road, however naturally the land (site and road) slopes down to the south. The proposal is set into the lowest corner of the site, closest to the motorway and away from the historic forts. The proposed building will be set off the eastern ridge and screened by semi-mature landscaping and planting which are being secured by conditions. The buffer of proposed planting is 10m deep with standard 2.5-3m high trees which will grow and mature significantly taller, behind an additional 5m deep dense hedgerow proposed (growing up to 6m high) and set 1.5m above the road and behind the existing hedgerow and bank. In the immediate and short term there will be interrupted views through this vegetation to the barn, which will have an acknowledged visual impact. However, in the longer term when the vegetation matures the views will be minimal. The proposed planting will help supplement the existing boundary planting on the site and complies with part (j) and (k) of Policy DS1. The development proposal is therefore considered by Officers to comply with Policy DS1 of the Fareham Local Plan 2037.

- 8.12. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, in terms of scale, design and materials. The proposal for an agricultural building in a rural setting along with the enhanced landscaping buffer would no longer negatively affect any key views in the area. Officers therefore consider that the development proposal therefore complies with Policies D1 and DS3 of the Fareham Local Plan 2037.

c) Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 8.13. The site is considered agricultural and rural in nature, not a new commercial use, so there is no requirement to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity for the site (Policy NE2). Nevertheless, with the significant amount of landscape buffer planting proposed to the east of the building, together with bird and bat boxes on the site, it is considered that the proposal does carry significant ecological benefits to the site.
- 8.14. The planting on the site was not solely suitable for chalk soil, the landscaping plan has been amended to add more localised plants and more mature planting, which will help screen the barn's visual impact. The Council's Ecologist has commented on the proposals and raises no concerns with the proposed landscaping.
- 8.15. Although not protected, the natural boundary planting on the site is being retained and enhanced, details are protected by condition, which is supported by Policy NE6 of the Fareham Local Plan 2037.

d) Historic environment

- 8.16. Officers have assessed the impact the barn will have on the views between the historic forts (Fort Nelson and Fort Wallington), which as part of the historic forts chain, it is important that visual links between them are retained. The proposed barn would be outside the desired view lines between the two historic forts. The development has been carefully considered by the Council's Conservation Planner, who has raised no objection to the proposals. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy HE1 of the Fareham Local Plan 2037.
- 8.17. In addition, it has been noted that the site lies close to significant archaeological sites for the area. Although the works are to the surface and the field has historically been used, an appropriately worded condition would be imposed to cease development if any evidence is found during construction.

e) Highways

- 8.18. There is an existing field gate into the site which will be used, vehicles will first turn onto the private haulage road before joining Downend Road, which has already been established as suitable for lorries.
- 8.19. The proposed barn would only be used for the applicant and would not be used for a separate commercial business. Therefore, there would not be an increased demand for parking. The Highway Authority at Hampshire County Council has been consulted on the proposals and no objections were received. The proposal therefore complies with Policy TIN2 of the Fareham Local Plan 2037

Summary

- 8.20. The principle of development and its need in a rural location has been accepted and the visual impact of the proposed has been mitigated against along with biodiversity enhancements. The development is therefore considered by Officers to comply with the relevant policies of the Fareham Local Plan 2037.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION, subject to the following Conditions:

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this decision.
REASON: To allow a reasonable time period for work to start, to comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and to enable the Council to review the position if a fresh application is made after that time.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be retained only in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - a) Location Plan
 - b) Site Plan – HERB
 - c) Proposed Floor, Roof and Elevation Plan - HERB
 - d) Proposed Views and Site Section - 51346-P7-01 A
 - e) Design and Access StatementREASON: To avoid any doubt over what is permitted
- 3) The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the materials schedule as set out in the submitted detail unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To secure the satisfactory appearance of the development.
- 4) The landscaping scheme submitted shall be implemented and completed within the first planting season following the commencement of the development or as otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority and shall be maintained in accordance with the agreed schedule. Any trees or plants which, within a period of ten years from first planting, are removed, die or, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, become

seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced, within the next available planting season, with others of the same species, size and number as originally approved.

REASON: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a standard of landscaping.

- 5) No floodlighting, security lighting or other external means of illumination of the site shall be provided, installed or operated at the site unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority following submission of a planning application for that purpose.

REASON: In order to control light pollution.

- 6) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification), the development hereby approved shall only be used as a grain store and for no other use permitted by Schedule 2, Part 3, Classes Q, R and S.

REASON: To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain control over its use.

- 7) Development shall cease on site if, during any stage of the works, unexpected ground conditions or materials which suggest potential archaeology are encountered. Works shall not recommence before an investigation and assessment of the identified archaeology has been undertaken and details of the findings, along with a detailed remedial scheme, if required, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to the occupation of the site hereby permitted the remediation scheme shall be fully implemented and shall be validated in writing to the Local Planning Authority by an independent competent person.

REASON: To ensure any potential archaeology found during construction is adequately investigated and remediated where required.

10.0 Notes for Information

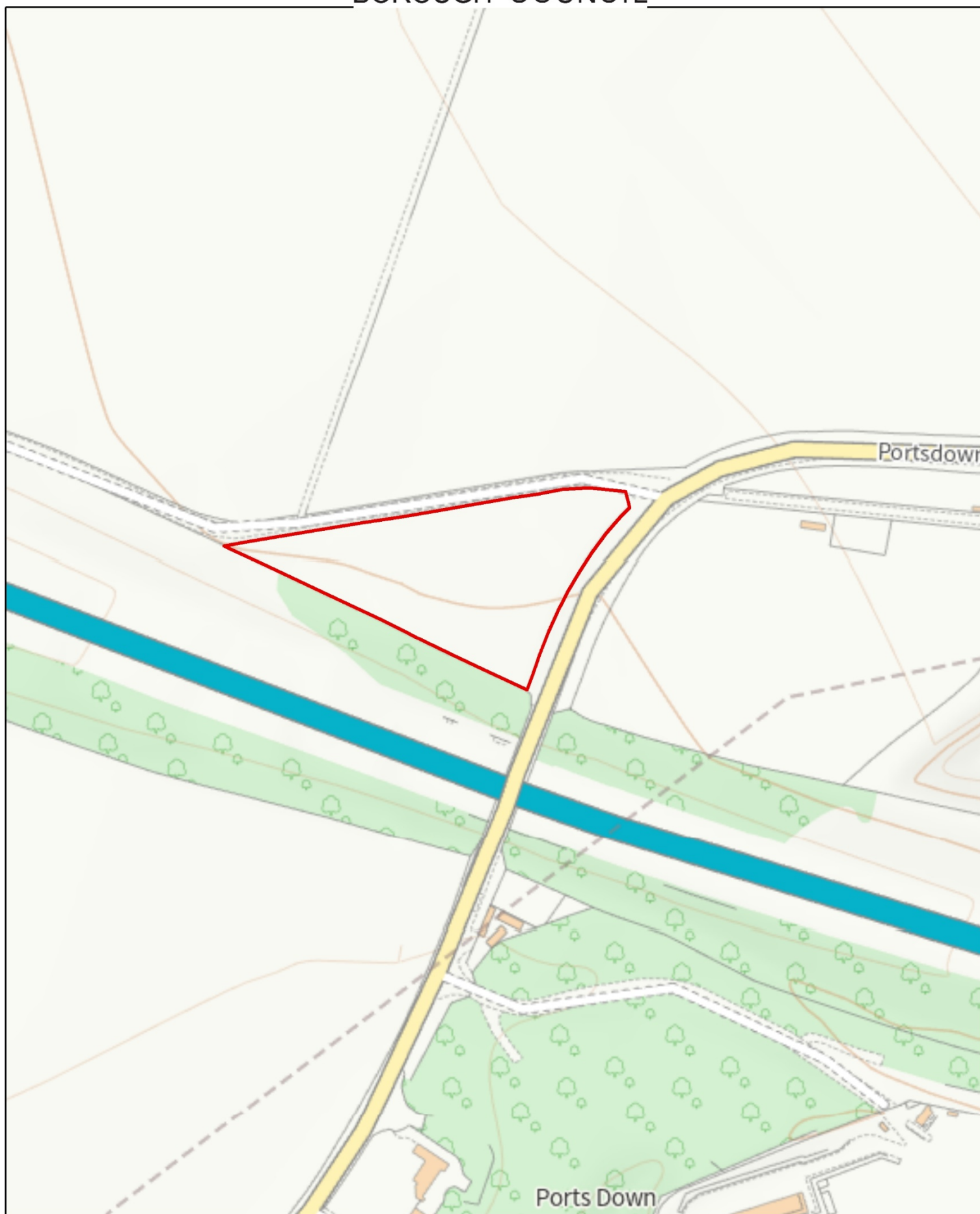
- 10.1. P/22/1655/FP

11.0 Background Papers

- 11.1. Application documents and all consultation responses and representations received as listed on the Council's website under the application reference number, together with all relevant national and local policies, guidance and standards and relevant legislation.

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL



Land West of Downend Road
Fareham
Scale 1:2,500



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