

Application No: 26/00376FULL Full Application

Site: Lime Wood, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst SO43 7FZ

Proposal: Track with lighting and fencing

Applicant: Lime Wood Group Limited

Case Officer: Liz Young

Parish: Lyndhurst Parish Council

1. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

Contrary to Parish Council view

2. POLICIES

Principal Development Plan Policies

Policy SP1 Supporting sustainable development
Policy DP2 General development principles
Policy SP4 Spatial strategy
Policy SP5 Nature conservation sites of international importance
Policy SP6 The natural environment
Policy SP7 Landscape character
Policy SP15 Tranquillity
Policy SP17 Local distinctiveness
Policy DP18 Design principles
Policy SP45 Extensions to non-residential buildings and uses
Policy SP46 Sustainable tourism development

Supplementary Planning Documents

Design Guide (2022)

National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (NPPF)

Sec. 2. Achieving sustainable development
Sec. 4. Decision-making
Sec. 12. Achieving well-designed places
Sec. 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

3. MEMBER COMMENTS

None received

4. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Lyndhurst Parish Council: Recommend permission.

- The proposed path is in keeping with other tracks/paths in the New Forest.
- The lighting is downlighting and will not cause a light pollution concern or have an adverse effect on the surrounding environment.
- The joining of the two sites at Lime Wood House is supported by Policy SP46.

5. CONSULTEES

New Forest District Council Environmental Protection (Contaminated Land): No adverse comments.

Naturespace UK: No objections subject to conditions.

Ecologist: Comments:

- The requirements of mandatory BNG are likely to be met.
- Proposed lighting design accords with the recommendation within the ecology survey.
- While the introduction of new development into agricultural areas and the countryside causes concern, there are no grounds for objection under SP6 due to the enhancement of the habitat.

Landscape Officer: Comments:

- Clarification is sought in respect to height of fence posts.
- Potential significant impact on the intrinsic quality of the landscape of the location.
- Clarification required in respect of installation and operation of external lighting so as to avoid impacts upon rural setting.
- Proposed planting should, produce a healthy and robust hedgerow, typical of the New Forest.

NFDC Environmental Protection (Contaminated Land): Do not wish to comment.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

7. RELEVANT HISTORY

Change of use from dwelling (Use Class C3) to guesthouse (Use Class C1); alterations to doors and windows of dwelling and outbuildings (26/00045FULL) granted on 30 March 2026.

Lake cabin (15/00525) granted on 26 August 2015.

Addition of swimming pool enclosure (12/97409) refused on 16 July 2012.

Roof and other external alterations to stable block (including addition of solar panels) (10/96030) granted on 11 March 2011.

New pitched roof to outbuilding (10/95671) granted on 01 December 2010.

Ground floor extension; External alterations; New roof to facilitate first floor extensions (09/94421) granted on 10 November 2009.

Recreation facilities (revisions to the relevant part of planning permission 85540) (07/91141) granted on 20 March 2007.

Recreation facilities (Revisions to the relevant part of Planning Permission 85540) (06/90190) refused on 19 July 2006.

Partial redevelopment by re-building of hotel accommodation; restaurant & ancillary space; driveway; parking; servicing area (05/85540) granted on 15 September 2005.

Partial redevelopment by re-building of hotel accommodation; restaurant and ancillary space; driveway; parking and servicing area (03/79950) granted on 13 October 2004.

Two-storey extension (Renewal of planning permission 62707) (03/78907) application withdrawn on 19 September 2003.

Partial redevelopment by rebuilding of hotel accommodation; restaurant and ancillary space; driveway; parking and servicing areas (03/77482) refused on 10 September 2003.

Erection of leisure suite/swimming pool building (NFDC/98/64622) Granted on 05 October 1998.

Two storey addition (NFDC/97/62707) granted on 27 July 1998.

1st floor extension to hotel - extension of time limit 51288 (NFDC/97/62510) granted on 16 December 1997.

Conversion and additions to form leisure suite/swimming pool (NFDC/96/59550) granted on 03 September 1996.

Two-storey addition - extension of time limit on PP 44065 (NFDC/94/55939) granted on 06 February 1995.

Addn of covered swimming pool with link to leisure suite (NFDC/94/55828) granted on 08 February 1995

Addition of covered swimming pool with link to main building (NFDC/94/54742) refused on 10 August 1994

Addition of two conservatories (NFDC/93/51431) granted on 10 March 1993

1st floor extension to hotel - extension of time limit 36666 (NFDC/92/51288) granted on 27 January 1993

8. ASSESSMENT

Application Site

8.1 The application site (just under 0.2 hectares in size) comprises a parcel of agricultural / grazing land located to the south east of Limewood House Hotel and to the north west of Park Dale Cottage (a detached dwelling which falls within the same ownership as the hotel). The New Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies immediately north and to the east of the site, whilst the land to the east also falls within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar designations. A public right of way lies to the east and runs on an approximate north south alignment.

8.2 For the purposes of planning policy the site lies in open countryside.

Proposed Development

8.3 Consent is sought to construct a track of approximately 160 metres in length. A fence of 1.2 metres in height is proposed to run along the southern edge of the track and lights would be mounted at 10 metre intervals along its length (positioned at 0.85 metres above ground level and mounted on the fence posts). The proposal would effectively provide a connecting path between the main hotel and Park Dale Cottage to the south east (which is operated and run by the hotel as a self-contained holiday let).

8.4 The total width of the proposal (inclusive of the track and fencing) would measure approximately 1.7 metres.

Consideration

- 8.5 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.6 Policy SP4 of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036 (2019) (herein referred to as the 'Local Plan') sets out the Spatial Strategy for the New Forest National Park and seeks to direct development towards the defined New Forest Villages (alongside site allocations) in the first instance. As identified above, the site does not lie within a settlement or within a site allocation. In such instances, Local Plan Policy SP4 states that development will only be permitted where:
- a. it is in accordance with Policy SP28 on Rural Exception Sites; or
 - b. it is in accordance with Policy DP44 on employment sites; or
 - c. there is an essential need for a countryside location; or
 - d. it meets the specific locational needs for commoners, Estate Workers or agricultural dwellings; or
 - e. it is an appropriate reuse or redevelopment of an existing building(s) in accordance with Policy DP49.
- 8.7 Local Plan Policy SP46 (Sustainable tourism development) is consistent with Policy SP4 and supports small-scale development of visitor facilities and accommodation using new or existing buildings in the four Defined Villages. It states that extensions to existing tourism developments will be considered in accordance with Policies DP45 and DP47. Policy DP45 states that the limited extension of existing non-residential buildings and uses will be permitted where they are contained within the site boundary.
- 8.8 As identified above, the site lies in open countryside. The entirety of the development lies on agricultural land (most recently used for the grazing of horses), outside the curtilage of the hotel. The hotel curtilage has consistently been defined as a smaller parcel of land (entirely separate from the current application site) on previous planning applications. The development does not relate to an employment site, or development associated with commoning or agriculture and does not involve the re-use of an existing building. There is also no information accompanying the application which demonstrates an essential need for a countryside location. For these reasons, the proposed development (which would amount to an incursion of development associated with the neighbouring hotel use onto agricultural land) is in conflict with Policies SP4, DP45 and SP46. Given the adjacency of the site to the Open Forest and the fact that it currently comprises grazing land, the proposal would effectively result in the loss of approximately 0.25 hectares of grazing land. This conflicts with the objectives of Policy SP48 in relation to maintaining the supply of land available for back up grazing or resisting the loss of back up grazing through development.

- 8.9 The application submission does not specifically identify or address the conflict with the Development Plan (i.e. the introduction of development associated with a tourism use beyond the hotel grounds within open countryside). Whilst the Applicant refers to historical maps and states that the site has historical links with Limewood, there is no information as it stands which demonstrates that the land has historically formed part and parcel of the hotel use (to the extent that it has served its day to day operation) and this information (which shows the site as a paddock) therefore does not serve to justify the development. It is also suggested by the Applicant that the proposal formalises a historic link from the main hotel. However, no further information has been provided in relation to this. Additionally, it should be recognised that Park Dale Cottage already benefits from its own independent access and parking area from the highway and so there would be no requirement for visitors to the cottage to use the parking area within the hotel grounds before accessing the cottage.
- 8.10 Overall, it is concluded that the general principle of the proposed development is not supported having regard to both the Development Plan and material considerations.
- 8.11 With regards to landscape considerations, the New Forest was designated as a National Park in 2005, giving the area the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. National Park status also means the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the New Forest - including its built environment – should be given great weight.
- 8.12 Policy SP1 seeks to ensure new development enhances the landscape of the New Forest through high quality design and responds to the local distinctiveness of the area. Policy DP2 states that development should be appropriate and sympathetic in terms of scale, appearance, form, siting and layout incorporating materials and boundary treatments which are appropriate to the site and its setting. Policy DP18 seeks to ensure development is contextually appropriate and does not harm key visual features, landscape setting or other valued components of the landscape.
- 8.13 Policy SP17 states that built development and changes of use which would individually or cumulatively erode the Park's local character or result in a gradual suburbanising effect within the National Park will not be permitted.
- 8.14 The application site lies within the Eastern Forest Heaths Landscape Character Area (heathland landscape type) (as defined within the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment). The assessment states that the varied habitat mosaic of wood pasture, wetlands, open glades and heathland have historically been associated with this landscape. Reference is also made to the strong rural and sparsely settled character of the area which is stated to be reliant on

grazing to maintain its varied mosaic habitats alongside the presence of continued pressure from recreation and visitor facilities across the landscape with car parks, camp sites and visitor traffic impacting on its peaceful character.

- 8.15 The open fields which surround the hotel grounds form an integral part of its rural setting, contribute towards the open character of the area and also form part of the gradual transition between the main hotel complex and the open forest which surrounds it. The site is therefore considered to be fully characteristic of the features referred to within the Landscape Character Assessment.
- 8.16 The proposed development would result in the introduction of a new area of hardsurfacing, 16 lights and fencing onto an open area of grazing land which currently contains no development at present. It is recognised that the proposed surface would comprise hoggin, with timber hedging, along with native hedgerow and low intensity lighting. However, these measures would not overcome the more fundamental concerns that the proposal would effectively result in a permanent incursion of uncharacteristic development and activity of a domestic character to a site which is currently unlit, contains no notable built form and lies beyond the confines of the hotel grounds.
- 8.17 The proposed development would be visible from adjacent land and the introduction of the track and new enclosure permanently superimposed within the site in combination with activity and after dark artificial light, ordinarily expected with residential uses, would create an intrusive and harmful urbanising effect.
- 8.18 It should also be highlighted that the development lies within an area which falls within "Level D" on the New Forest National Park tranquillity mapping (with Level E being the highest level of tranquillity). Taking these points together, the proposal is considered to represent an uncharacteristic form of development and suburbanisation which would erode the rural character of the area and lead to a loss of tranquillity contrary to the requirements of Policy SP15.
- 8.19 Whilst the supportive comments received from Lyndhurst Parish Council are noted and that the view could be taken that the proposal when considered in isolation would be small scale, Local Plan Policy SP17 specifically recognises that the vast majority of applications in the New Forest National Park entail minor development but identifies that increasing amounts of such small-scale development can result in a creeping suburbanisation of the National Park, slowly eroding the Forest's distinctive character. Given the existence of extensive tourism accommodation within the New Forest National Park located within reach of the New Forest international designations (alongside the significant pressure for recreational access), the development is one which could readily be replicated on other sites. This is a consideration which further weighs against the granting of planning permission.

- 8.20 With regards to impacts upon trees and natural features, the submitted plans indicate that the proposal would lie largely away from any tree root protection areas and, on this basis, there is unlikely to be any potential conflict with retained trees adjacent to the development. This would not, however, outweigh the harmful impacts identified in relation to loss of rural character.
- 8.21 Alongside the identified conflict with Policies SP7 and SP15, the development would also be contrary to the requirements of Policies SP1, DP2 and SP17 which together seek to ensure new development enhances the landscape of the New Forest through high quality design, that it responds to the local distinctiveness of the area, that it would be appropriate and sympathetic, contextually appropriate and would not erode the Park's local character, or result in a gradual suburbanising effect. In this instance, none of these objectives would be achieved. Contrary to paragraph 89 and 187 of the NPPF, the development design would also not be sensitive to its surroundings and would not recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 8.22 With regards to impacts upon neighbouring amenity, having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed works and the fact that other than Park Dale Cottage itself the proposal does not lie close to any neighbouring dwellings, the proposal would not impact upon the living conditions or amenities of any neighbouring uses in the locality. Similarly, the proposal would not impact upon vehicular access arrangements between the site and the public highway, or impact upon overall demand for off road parking provision. On this basis, no conflict with Policy DP2 has been identified.
- 8.23 With regards to local biodiversity interests, the application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment which indicates that the site is identified as having commuting and foraging potential for reptiles. Potential impacts upon amphibians are also identified. Whilst the site lies within a high-risk zone for great crested newts, the ecology survey confirms a negative eDNA result in respect of these species. The proposed lighting is stated to have potential impacts upon foraging behaviour of badgers and bats. The ecology survey recommends various mitigation measures in relation to these species, and it is considered that, subject to these measures being secured through conditions (in the event that consent is forthcoming), no significant adverse impacts are indicated.
- 8.24 It is recognised that the site comprises wood pasture, parkland and grazing marsh which is considered to be of value at the national level. However, as identified by the Authority's Ecologist, this is not an irreplaceable habitat and its condition has been impacted to a degree by the ongoing grazing use.
- 8.25 With regards to nature conservation sites of international importance, Policy SP5 states that development which may affect the integrity of such

sites will not be permitted unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the development, and there are no alternatives. It also states that development which is likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) will not be permitted. In this instance, the proposal would lie outside the adjacent statutory nature conservation designations. In light of this and the nature and scale of the development, no significant adverse impacts upon the adjacent statutory nature conservation sites are anticipated.

- 8.26 It is recognised that biodiversity net gain is now required under the statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This seeks to ensure development proposals deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.
- 8.27 The application has been accompanied by a biodiversity net gain assessment, a biodiversity net gain metric along with existing and proposed habitat plans. This information indicates that the development would result in a 11.02% net gain for area units. On this basis, it is concluded that subject to the agreed measures being secured through an appropriate mechanism in the event that consent were to be granted, the proposal would secure 10% BNG as required by the Environment Act 2021.

Conclusion

- 8.28 The proposed development lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Lyndhurst, and it is recognised that the Development Plan looks to direct new development towards the most appropriate locations balancing the need for development with the need to protect the countryside. Accordingly, a distinction must be drawn between the built-up areas, including commercial land, and adjacent open land, if the surrounding countryside is to be protected from unwarranted development. The necessity of the countryside location has not been substantiated beyond the desire to provide more convenient connectivity between the main hotel and Park Dale Cottage.
- 8.29 The development, if permitted, would therefore undermine the policies within the Development Plan if it were to be permitted without appropriate justification.
- 8.30 The emphasis within the Development Plan towards the protection of countryside is consistent with the NPPF which makes it clear that planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The development would result in a significant encroachment of commercial use onto open countryside in direct conflict with the relevant policies which amongst other things seek to ensure new

development recognises, protects and enhances the National Park's distinctive landscape where particular emphasis is placed on conserving local distinctiveness as well as tranquillity, sense of place and setting.

- 8.31 This conflict with the Development Plan results in harm given that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led and there are no material considerations which would justify granting planning consent in this case.
- 8.32 It is therefore recommended that planning permission should be refused.

9. RECOMMENDATION

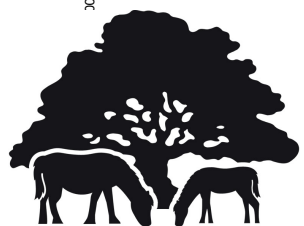
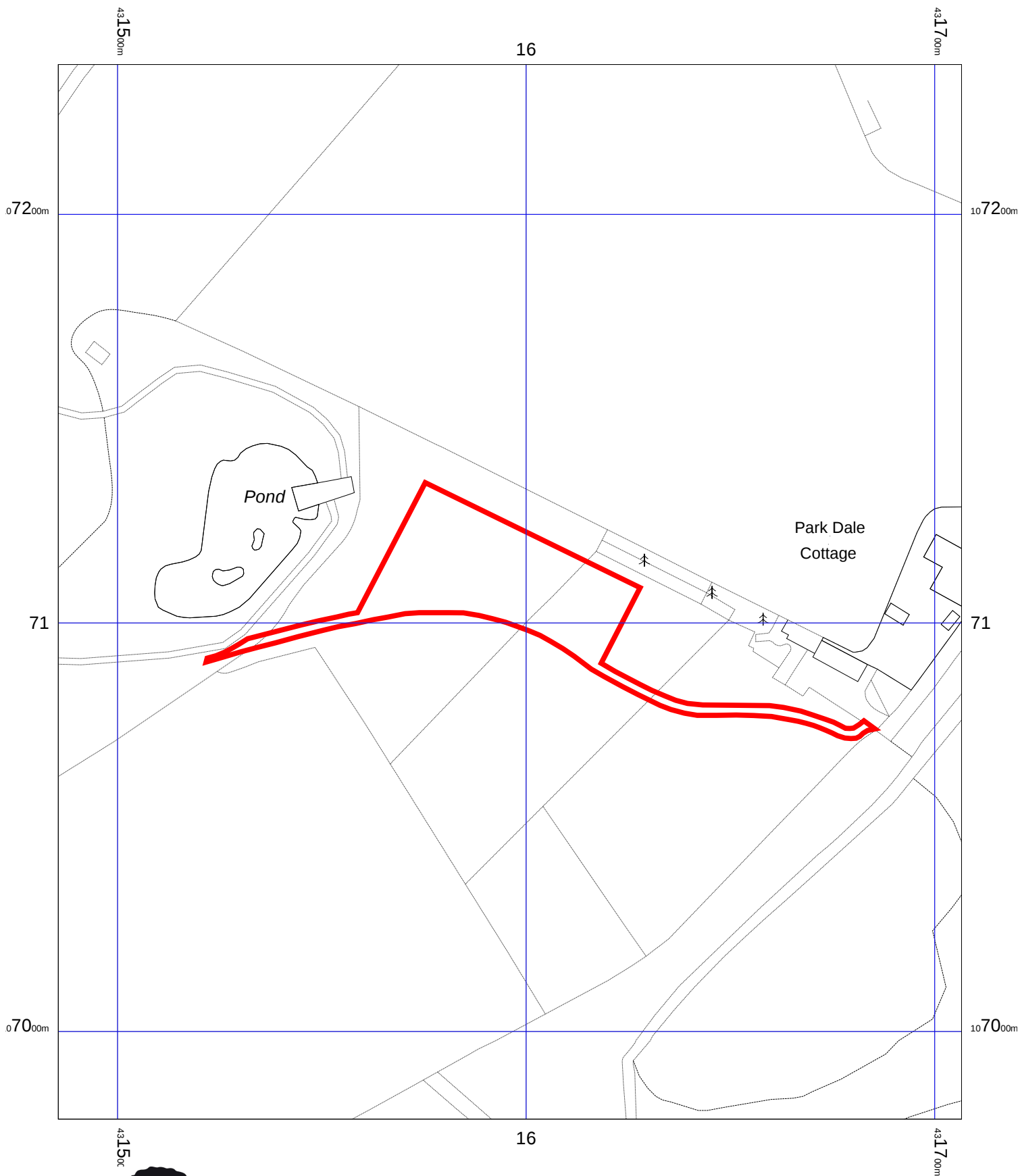
Refuse

Reason(s) for refusal:

1. The proposed development would result in a significant incursion of commercial development associated with the neighbouring hotel use onto agricultural land which falls wholly outside the established hotel grounds. The need for a countryside location has not been substantiated and the proposal would fail to enhance the Special Qualities of the New Forest National Park. The proposal would also lead to the potential loss of back up grazing land for New Forest commoners. There are no material considerations which would justify granting planning permission in this case and the proposed development is therefore in conflict with Policies SP4, DP45, SP46 and SP48 of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016- 2036 (August 2019).

Furthermore, the proposed development would not seek to further the statutory purposes of the National Park, contrary to the requirements of Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which amended Section 11A of the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

2. The proposal would erode the rural character of the area and lead to a loss of tranquillity. Furthermore, it would fail to enhance landscape character through high quality design, would not respond to local distinctiveness, would not be contextually appropriate and would lead to a harmful suburbanising impact. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Policies SP1, SP7, DP2, SP15 and SP17 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016- 2036 (August 2019).



NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

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