

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 4th December 2025

PART 4

Report of the Head of Planning

PART 4

Swale Borough Council’s own development; observation on County Council’s development; observation of development by Statutory Undertakers and by Government Departments; and recommendations to the County Council on ‘County Matter’ applications.

4.1 REFERENCE NO 24/503658/FULL		
PROPOSAL Creation of new vehicular entrance.		
SITE LOCATION Central Park Stadium Church Road Sittingbourne Kent ME10 3SB		
RECOMMENDATION Delegate to the Head of Planning to grant planning permission subject to appropriate safeguarding conditions as set out in the report, with further delegation to the Head of Planning to negotiate the precise wording of conditions, including adding or amending such conditions as may be necessary and appropriate.		
APPLICATION TYPE Minor		
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Council owned land.		
Case Officer Rebecca Corrigan		
WARD Murston	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL N/A	APPLICANT Swale Borough Council AGENT Clarkebond
DATE REGISTERED 08.10.2024		TARGET DATE 17.08.2025
BACKGROUND PAPERS AND INFORMATION: The full suite of documents submitted and representations received pursuant to the above application are available via the link below: - <u>24/503658/FULL Creation of new vehicular entrance. Central Park Stadium Church Road Sittingbourne Kent ME10 3SB</u>		

1. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 1.1. The application site is located within the built-up area of Sittingbourne and forms part of the wider Central Park Stadium complex. The stadium is a long-established leisure venue, primarily used most recently for greyhound racing and speedway events, and is situated on the eastern side of Church Road. The surrounding area comprises a mix of residential and commercial uses, with open land to the south and east.

2. PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1. The site has a long and detailed planning history associated with its use as a leisure and sporting venue, including applications relating to stadium operations, hours of opening, signage, and ancillary structures. However, none of the previous applications are considered directly relevant to the current proposal.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The application seeks planning permission for the creation of a new vehicular entrance into the grounds of the Central Park Stadium. The new entrance would be located to the north of the existing access point on Church Road and will provide improved access to the land in the north of the site.
- 3.2. The works would involve alterations to the boundary treatment, installation of dropped kerbs, and associated landscaping and visibility splays to ensure safe access and egress.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1. Two rounds of consultation have been undertaken, during which letters were sent to neighbouring occupiers. A notice was displayed at the application site.
- 4.2. No representations were received following the public consultation.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1. Set out below is a summary of matters raised in representations, with the comments reflecting the final position of the consultee. There have been two rounds of consultation for all consultees.
- 5.2. **KCC Highways** – Provided the completion and maintenance of the access and provision and retention of parking spaces are secured by condition, then raise no objection.
- 5.3. **KCC Minerals and Waste** - No land-won minerals or waste management capacity safeguarding objections or comments to make regarding this matter.
- 5.4. **KCC Ecological Advice Service (KCC EAS)** - Due to the urban setting, small scale of the development and lack of suitable surrounding vegetation, no ecological information is required. It is considered that on site enhancements are not feasible. An

informative is recommended regarding nesting birds. The site is considered exempt from BNG.

- 5.5. **Mid-Kent Environmental Health** - No concerns in regard to noise, air quality, contaminated land and lighting.
- 5.6. **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** - HSE does not advise on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission in this case.

6. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES**

Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Council Local Plan 2017 (the Local Plan)

- ST1 Delivering sustainable development in Swale
- ST3 The Swale settlement strategy
- ST4 Meeting the Local Plan development targets
- ST5 The Sittingbourne area strategy
- CP4 Requiring good design
- DM6 Managing transport demand and impact
- DM7 Vehicle parking
- DM14 General development criteria
- DM28 Biodiversity and geological conservation

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Parking Standard Supplementary Planning Document, 2020.

National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Kent Mineral and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 (KM&WLP), 2025 & the Kent Mineral Sites Plan (KMSP), 2020.

7. **ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1. The main considerations involved in the assessment of the application are:
- Principle
 - Transport and Highways
 - Visual Impact

- Ecology
- Living Conditions
- Other Matters

7.2. Principle

- 7.2.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that the starting point for decision making is the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2.2. The NPPF provides the national policy context for the proposed development and is a material consideration of considerable weight in the determination of the application. The NPPF states that any proposed development that accords with an up-to-date local plan should be approved without delay. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and for decision-taking this means approving development that accords with the development plan.
- 7.2.3. Policy ST3 of the Local Plan supports development within the urban confines of towns and local centres across the borough. In this case, the site and proposed access is located within the built-up area boundary of Sittingbourne. The principle of the development is therefore considered acceptable subject to other relevant considerations as set out below.

7.3. Transport and Highways

- 7.3.1. Policy DM7 of the Local Plan requires parking provision to be in accordance with the Council's Parking SPD. Policy DM14 seeks to ensure that all development proposals achieve safe vehicular access.
- 7.3.2. The NPPF promotes sustainable patterns of development and expects land use and transport planning to work in parallel in order to deliver such. A core principle of the NPPF is that:

“Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.”

Access

- 7.3.3. The proposed new vehicular entrance would be located circa 20m north of the existing main access to Central Park Stadium on Church Road.
- 7.3.4. The proposed access will feature a vehicle crossover laid flush to the existing carriageway on Church Road, facilitating smooth entry and exit for vehicles. The application is supported by details of visibility splays together with swept path analysis. These assessments demonstrate that acceptable visibility is available in both

directions when exiting the site, whilst also demonstrating that heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and refuse vehicles can safely navigate the access without obstruction.

- 7.3.5. KCC Highways have reviewed the proposal and raise no objection, subject to the imposition of conditions.

Parking

- 7.3.6. The Swale Borough Council Parking Standards (SPD), which supports Policy DM7 of the Local Plan, sets out guidance for parking provision across the Borough. It emphasises that parking provision should be appropriate to the type, scale, and location of development, and should support sustainable transport objectives while ensuring safe and efficient operation of the highway network.
- 7.3.7. Central Park Stadium currently provides 272 parking spaces. The formation of the proposed entrance would result in the loss of approximately six existing parking spaces. Given the limited number of spaces that would need to be removed in order to facilitate the formation of the access, it is not considered that the proposals would lead to any unacceptable impact on the parking provision at the site.
- 7.3.8. Whilst a condition securing the replacement of the six spaces is not considered necessary in this case, a desktop exercise carried out during the course of the application demonstrates that there is space available in the wider site to accommodate the re-provision of these spaces if required in future.
- 7.3.9. In view of the above, the proposals comply with Policies DM7 and DM14 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

7.4. Visual Impact

- 7.4.1. Local Plan Policies CP4 and DM14 and the NPPF attach great importance to the design of the built environment and that design should contribute positively to making places better for people.
- 7.4.2. The proposed new vehicular entrance is modest in scale and would involve limited physical alterations to the site frontage. The design and materials proposed are considered appropriate for the location and would not detract from the visual character of the surrounding area. The entrance would be integrated into the existing boundary treatment, and any associated landscaping would help soften its appearance, ensuring the development remains in keeping with the established streetscene.
- 7.4.3. The proposal complies with Policies CP4 and DM14 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

7.5. Ecology

- 7.5.1. Local Plan Policy DM28 sets out that development proposals will conserve, enhance, and extend biodiversity, provide for net gains where possible, minimise any adverse impacts and compensate where impacts cannot be mitigated. The NPPF states that

the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. The NPPF states that *'if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.'*

- 7.5.2. No ecological information has been submitted with this application. However, following consultation with KCC Ecology, it is advised that the proposed development has limited potential to result in significant ecological impacts. This conclusion is based on the small scale of the proposal, its urban setting, and the lack of suitable surrounding vegetation or habitats for protected species. As such, no further ecological surveys or mitigation measures are considered necessary. It is also considered that on site enhancements are not feasible.
- 7.5.3. In view of the above, the proposals are considered in accordance with Policy DM28 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

BNG

- 7.5.4. This application is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain as it falls within the 'de minimis' category.

7.6. Living Conditions

Existing residents

- 7.6.1. Policy DM14 of the Local Plan and the NPPF requires that new development causes no significant harm to amenity.
- 7.6.2. The proposed development has been assessed in terms of its potential impact on the living conditions of nearby residents, particularly those located along Church Road and in the vicinity of Central Park Stadium.
- 7.6.3. The new vehicular entrance is not anticipated to result in significant increases in traffic or noise levels beyond those already associated with the stadium's existing operations.
- 7.6.4. The entrance is positioned away from the nearest residential properties and would not introduce any new built form or activity that would materially affect outlook, privacy, or daylight. The separation distance, combined with the limited intensity of use associated with the access, ensures that the proposal would not give rise to any unacceptable impacts on residential amenity. Environmental Health have raised no objections.
- 7.6.5. The proposal is considered to maintain an acceptable standard of residential amenity for existing residents in accordance with Policy DM14 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

7.7. Conclusion

- 7.7.1. The proposed development for the creation of a new vehicular entrance lies within the built-up area boundary of Sittingbourne, where the principle of development is acceptable. The proposal is modest in scale and the design would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the area. The development is not considered to have any adverse impact on living conditions of existing residents or ecology, and is exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements under the Environment Act 2021.
- 7.7.2. The access proposed would not lead to any unacceptable impact on highways safety. The proposal is considered to comply with relevant Local Plan policies and the NPPF and is therefore recommended for approval.
- 7.7.3. In considering the application, account has been taken of the information included with the application submission, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plan, and all other material considerations including representations made by statutory and non-statutory consultees.

7.8. Recommendation

- 7.8.1. Grant subject to conditions.

7.9. Conditions

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:

Received 14 November 2025

- Site location plan

Received 04 October 2024

- 0200 Rev P03 General Arrangement
- 0300 Rev P01 Highways Construction Details
- 0400 Rev P02 Site Clearance
- 0500 Rev P02 Signing and Lining
- 0600 Rev P02 Surfacing and Kerbing

- 0700 Rev P02 External Works

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The vehicular access hereby approved shall be completed in accordance with the approved plans prior to its first use. The access shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the provision of a safe and suitable access to the site in the interests of highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

