

Meeting: Planning and Development Committee

Agenda Item:

Date: 12 February 2026

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Lead Officer: Alex Robinson

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Application No : 25/00894/FP and 25/00895/AD

Location : King George V Playing Field, Tennis Courts Sish Lane

Proposal :

1. Construction of 3G non-infill floodlit play zone, including hard standing area and sports fencing
2. Display of 13no. non illuminated vinyl banners to play zone

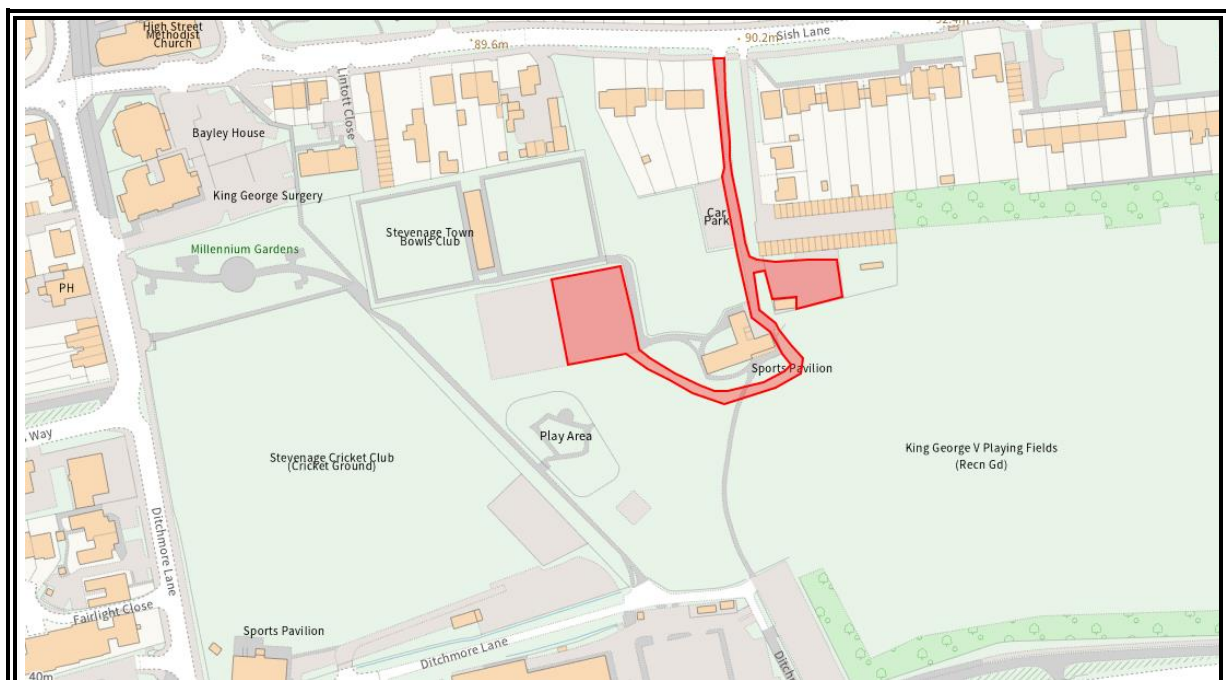
Drawing Nos.: MCA-MUK3521-01-D; MCA-MUK3521-02; MCA-MUK3521-03-A; MCA-MUK3521-04; MCA-MUK3521-05; MCA-MUK3521-06; MCA-MUK3521-07-A; MCA-MUK3521-08; MCA-MUK3521-09-A; MCA-MUK3521-10;

Applicant : Mr Geoff Caine

Agent: Mr Neil McHugh

Date Valid: 19 December 2025

Recommendation: GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION and GRANT ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises a vacant tennis court within the King George V Playing Fields which is situated to the north of the Town Centre and is bounded by Fairlands Way to the south, Sish Lane to the north, Ditchmore Lane to the west and Popple Way to the east. The northern and eastern sides are bounded with the rear gardens of residential dwellings located in the respective roads detailed previously.
- 1.2 King George V Playing Fields as a whole, lies adjacent to the Old Town Conservation Area, whilst the red line boundary of the application site itself is approximately 60m to the east of the conservation area boundary.
- 1.3 The red line boundary of the planning application includes a small area of grassland in the park and footpaths to temporarily enable construction. These areas will be returned to their existing condition upon completion of the construction works.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 NONE.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The full planning application seeks planning permission for the construction of a 3G, floodlit PlayZone, including hard standing area and sports fencing.
- 3.2 The footprint of the PlayZone would be 30m by 20m with additional 3.66m by 1m goal recess areas at each end. Spectator areas outside of the PlayZone would be surfaced in porous asphalt. The construction of the PlayZone accords with the Football Foundation as follows:
 - 40mm 3G non-infill synthetic turf
 - 15mm prefabricated shockpad
 - 250mm sub base
 - Formation layer
- 3.3 The advertisement consent application seeks permission for 13no. non-illuminated vinyl signs. The vinyl signs are not illuminated. Three each on the north, south, east, and west elevations (totalling 12 signs) would measure 2.4m wide and 1m high, and one on the eastern elevation would measure 1.8m wide and 1.8m high. The signs would be at the top of the fencing and approximately 2m from ground level.
- 3.4 The application comes before the Planning and Development Committee as the land is owned by Stevenage Borough Council, and the Council is also the applicant.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 Following notification of the application via letters and the erection of site notices, public representations in support of the application have been received from the following:
 - Everyone Active;
 - Stevenage Borough Football Club;
 - Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre.
- 4.2 A summary of the comments received are set out below:
 - Great opportunity for safe, inclusive, accessible outdoor activities;
 - Will improve use of sport and physical activity, especially for deprived communities;

- Will improve health and well-being;
- High quality community programmes and youth engagement;
- Great addition to Stevenage's leisure and sports provision

4.3 Representations in objection to the application have been received from the following:

- Cycling UK (Stevenage)

4.4 A summary of the comments received are set out below:

- No direct cycle access to the application site;
- No explanation of the number of Sheffield Stands provided;
- Dismounting and walking through the park to the site is contrary to LTN 1/20;
- The provision of a new high quality cycle route to the site is required.

4.5 The aforementioned is not a verbatim copy of the objections which have been raised. Full copies of the representations received can be viewed on the Council's website.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1. B.E.A.M.S

5.1.1 The proposed use would not be out of keeping for its location. The mesh fencing and flood lights will be visible from the Conservation Area, Millenium Gardens, and the surrounding footpaths. The development has potential to result in very low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Old Town Conservation Area through urbanising development within its setting. However, there are clear public benefits which could outweigh this harm. The associated vinyl signage is not illuminated and are relevant to the use of the site. Whilst the signage does increase the visibility of the site, their impact on the significance of the Old Town Conservation Area is neutral.

5.2 Herts County Council as Highways Authority on 25/00894/FP

5.2.1 12th January 2026: The Highways Authority is unable to reach a recommendation. The applicant has failed to provide information on trip generation; the applicant has failed to provide car parking details; the applicant has failed to provide the number of construction vehicles expected and the turning facilities for large vehicles is not specified in the Construction Management Plan.

5.2.2 28th January 2026: The existing access road off Sish Lane is relatively narrow, and the Highway Authority initially raised concerns regarding the ability of long goods vehicles to enter and exit the site in forward gear. The applicant has since confirmed that commercial waste collection and refuse vehicles currently utilise this access and are able to enter and exit in forward gear without issue. To ensure that construction activities do not adversely impact highway safety or disrupt traffic flow on Sish Lane, it is recommended that a pre-commencement condition requiring a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) be imposed. This will help manage construction-related vehicle movements and mitigate any inconvenience to users of the school site and the adjacent highway. In summary, taking all matters into account, the Highway Authority considers that the proposed development is unlikely to generate a significant number of vehicular trips or result in severe impacts on the surrounding highway network. The proposal is therefore not contrary to local or national policy, including LTP4 and paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024). As such, the Highway Authority raises no objection to the application, subject to the conditions and information outlined above.

5.3 Herts County Council as Highways Authority on 25/00895/AD

- 5.3.1 The proposal involves installation of 13 no of non-illuminated vinyl banners to the play zone fence. The submitted application confirms that the development site is located within the King George -V Park in Stevenage which is out of highway jurisdiction. The Highway Authority has reviewed the submission and considers that the signs will not adversely impact driver visibility on adjacent highways, particularly in relation to public highway land. Accordingly, Hertfordshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, raises no objection to the proposal.

5.4 SBC Environmental Health

- 5.4.1 9th January 2025: The Noise Impact Assessment concludes the site will likely fall within “no observed adverse impact”, however, it does recommend a Noise Management Plan and we have no disagreement to these points subject to a condition requiring submission prior to first use. The assessment of the flood lights is not undertaken to recommended guidance; once updated e will be happy to comment further. The site is unlikely to be contaminated but a condition relating to unexpected contamination is recommended. The submitted Construction Management Plan is acceptable.
- 5.4.2 Following discussions between officers in Planning and Environmental Health with the applicant and their relevant consultants, additional data on the flood lights was provided and comments were provided as follows:
13th January 2026: Happy to agree that the site is situated within an E3 Environmental Zone and the design complies with the maximum light levels for such a zone. I recommend a curfew on the lighting beyond 10pm to protect residential dwellings nearby. No objections to the lighting scheme if controlled through a condition.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 6.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans can provide for housing and other development in a sustainable manner. The latest version of the NPPF was published in December 2024 (with further minor amendments in February 2025).
- 6.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 6.1.3 The NPPF should be read as a whole (including its footnotes and annexes). It should also be read in conjunction with the government’s planning policy for traveller sites, and its planning policy for waste.

6.2 The Development Plan

- 6.2.1 For Stevenage, the development plan comprises the following documents:
- Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031
 - Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD 2011-2026
 - Waste Site Allocations DPD 2011-2026
 - Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016

6.3 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 2019)

- 6.3.1 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in 2019, well before the publication of the latest version of the NPPF. However, the policies in the plan should not be considered out-of-date for this reason alone. Instead, weight must be given to them according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan align to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.3.2 There are also some limited areas of inconsistency between the policies in the local plan and the NPPF. Where relevant, these are explained later in this report.
- 6.3.3 The policies in the adopted plan most relevant to determining the current application are as follows:

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage;
Policy SP8: Good design;
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment;
Policy IT5: Parking and access;
Policy GD1: High quality design;
Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1;
Policy FP5: Contaminated land;
Policy FP7: Pollution;
Policy FP8: Pollution sensitive uses;
Policy NH1: Principal Open Spaces;
Policy NH6: General Protection for Open Spaces.

6.4 Local Plan Review and Update (2024)

Local Plan Partial Review and Update

- 6.4.1 The council concluded a full review of the plan in 2024, as required by regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 6.4.2 In response to the review, the Council has produced a partial update of the local plan. Weight must be given to the emerging policies in the partial update according to:
1. the stage of preparation of the emerging plan;
 2. the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the policies; and
 3. the degree of consistency between the policies and the most recent revision of the NPPF.
- 6.4.3 At the time of writing, the partial update is at the stage of having been submitted to the secretary of state for examination. The examination hearings took place in December 2025 and the Council is working on a schedule of Main Modifications as recommended by the Planning Inspector.
- 6.4.4 Given that the examination has yet to conclude, there remain unresolved objections to a number of emerging policies. The partial update is nonetheless at an advanced stage of preparation and the council considers the emerging policies within it to have a high degree of consistency with the NPPF. Where relevant, the weight to be given to emerging policies will be set out in the assessment section of this report.

6.5 Other Material Considerations

- 6.5.1 In determining planning applications, regard must also be had to other material consideration. This may include, but is not limited to:
- The Planning Practice Guidance
 - The National Design Guide
 - Written ministerial statements and directions
 - Guidance published by Hertfordshire County Council
 - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- Stevenage Borough Council supplementary planning documents

6.5.2 Planning decisions must also reflect relevant internal obligations and statutory requirements.

6.6 Community Infrastructure Levy

6.6.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (“CIL”) Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location, and floor space of a development.

7. APPRAISAL

7.1 The main issues in the assessment of the applications are the acceptability of the proposal in land use policy terms, design and impact on the character and visual amenity of the Principal Open Space and nearby Conservation Area, amenity of neighbouring properties, highways, access, and parking provision, and impact of the signage on public safety and residential amenities.

7.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 Principle of Development

7.2.1 The application site is located within an area of principal open space, defined in Policy NH1/4 of the adopted Local Plan as a Principal Park with children’s play area, known as King George V Playing Fields. However, the application site itself is contained within a large, vacant area of concrete hardstanding that was previously used as tennis courts.

7.2.2 Policy NH1 states that planning permission will only be granted where the proposal would not result in the loss of any part of the Principal Open Space, where it would not have an adverse impact upon the Principal Open Space, and where it would reasonably provide or contribute towards the maintenance or improvement of the Principal Open Space.

7.2.3 King George V Playing Fields are of town-wide significance through the provision of multiple sports pitches for football, cricket, hockey, and lawn bowls, as well as provision of a large children’s play space. Retaining this area as undeveloped land was part of the original masterplan for the New Town. It provides a facility used by residents from all across the Borough (and beyond). It performs a regional role in providing recreational pursuits, largely through grass roots football, but is just as likely to have people using it from neighbouring streets to meet everyday needs. It also plays host to the town’s annual ‘Stevenage Day’ in addition to hosting visiting fairgrounds, music events and much more.

7.2.4 The proposal seeks to utilise the existing vacant tennis courts for the construction of a modern, high quality, play zone for community sports and leisure purposes. The PlayZone Programme has been developed to tackle inequalities in physical activity and access to high quality facilities in targeted areas, by The Football Foundation providing funding towards community led spaces.

7.2.5 The proposal aims to provide a facility that supports the delivery of high-quality sport and recreational play by providing an area that can be used when natural daylight is limited, especially in the evenings and in winter and by providing the opportunity to arrange specialised coaching sessions when natural daylight is limited.

7.2.6 The PlayZone would be 30m by 20m with additional goal recess areas at each end and would be enclosed with 3m high twin bar panelled fencing with the height of the fence increasing to 4m high behind each goal. Floodlighting would be provided by way of 4no. 8m high lighting columns.

- 7.2.7 No part of the proposed development would encroach on any of the sports pitches, children's play area, nor any grassed areas used for informal leisure and recreation.
- 7.2.8 It would present an opportunity to enhance the area through increasing available facilities for the public to augment the leisure uses already available. Policy NH1 states that planning permission will be granted for small scale leisure and recreation developments within a Principal Open Space where they support its continued use and maintenance and it is considered that the proposed development would meet these criteria. The proposal will contribute to the overall active, vibrant and attractive principal open space which will fulfil the needs of residents and visitors of the Town by providing an additional activity with high quality facilities which would accord with the requirements of the NPPF (2024) to provide healthy communities.

7.3 Design and visual impact, including on heritage assets

- 7.3.1 Chapter 12. (Achieving well-designed places) of the NPPF (2024) stipulates that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process. Where development is not well designed, permission should be refused.
- 7.3.2 Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2024) requires Local Planning Authorities to place great weight on preserving historic assets and their significance; that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification; and that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. It goes on to state that 'Where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'
- 7.3.3 Case law (South Lakeland, 1992) has determined that 'preserve' means 'to do no harm'. However, if harm is identified, the NPPF provides a means of weighing either 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the proposal. In doing so, case law has emphasised the need to give "considerable importance and weight" to preserving listed buildings or the character and appearance of conservation areas (Barnwell Manor, Case No: C1/2013/0843). However, the presumption 'to preserve' is not irrebuttable and "can be outweighed by material considerations powerful enough to do so" (Forge Field (Case Nos: CO/735/2013; CO/16932/2013) and a decision maker that has followed the process set out in the NPPF, in respect to weighing harm and benefits, can reasonably be expected to have complied with the 'statutory duties' of the 1990 Act (Mordue, Case No. C1/2015/1067).
- 7.3.4 Policy NH10 of the adopted Local Plan relates to Conservation Areas and states that development proposals within or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant CAMP SPD. Turning to the adopted Local Plan, Policy SP13 relates to the historic environment. This states that the council will preserve and enhance the most important area and characteristics of Stevenage.
- 7.3.5 Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan Partial Review (2024) are deemed to carry significant weight, this is because they generally reflect the good design principles outlined in the NPPF and National Design Guide, i.e., that these policies require developments do not adversely impact the amenities of neighbouring occupiers as a good design principle.

- 7.3.6 In the emerging local plan partial review and update, criterion (e) is updated to refer to “unacceptable” adverse impacts. The intention behind the change is to make clear that in some circumstances, an adverse impact might still fall within acceptable bounds and that this is a matter of judgement for the decision maker.
- 7.3.7 The proposal is for a PlayZone that is enclosed with 3m high fencing, rising to 4m at the goal ends and the provision of 8m high floodlights. 13no. non-illuminated vinyl signs would be placed around the top of the fencing advertising the PlayZone. The proposal comprises a high quality, modern, sports provision that is located within a public space used primarily for sporting and leisure.
- 7.3.8 The proposal, whilst an acceptable use of the land, would nevertheless have an impact on the visual amenities of the area, and on the adjacent conservation area. The proposed fencing would be green which will mitigate the visual appearance through ‘blending in’ with the surrounding soft landscaping and is a standard paint colour for this type of development. The non-illuminated vinyl signage on the fencing will also be highly visible in the immediate area.
- 7.3.9 The Council’s Heritage Advisor has reviewed the application and advised that the proposed PlayZone will result in very limited harm to the significance of the conservation area, described as being ‘very low level of less than substantial harm’. They go on to advise that the associated signage would be visually acceptable in this instance and would have a neutral impact. As such, harm has been identified from the PlayZone itself but not from the associated signage, and a planning balance must be undertaken of any public benefits against the harm.
- 7.3.10 The proposal would see the creation of a publicly accessible, high-quality sports provision that, through the use of controlled floodlighting, would be available all year round and both during the day and when daylight is sub-optimal. There is a substantial volume of evidence in the public domain that physical activity, in all age groups, is essential to live a healthy and fulfilling life into older years. The NHS advises that physical activity can lower the risk of certain cancers, (bowel and breast), osteoarthritis, bone fractures, depression, falls in older adults, and even dementia. They also state that there is research to evidence that regular physical activity can boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality, energy levels and reduce stress.
- 7.3.11 Accordingly, from a public health and social perspective, the proposal has significant benefits. It would deliver an excellent opportunity to increase fitness levels, improve mental well-being, and encourage socialisation and recreation.
- 7.3.12 It is concluded that the public benefits arising from the delivery of this high-quality sporting provision would significantly outweigh the limited harm identified and the proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.
- 7.3.13 The proposed signage would be flat to the fencing and not illuminated. The signs are proportionate to the scale of the proposal and do not appear over dominating or overbearing in wider views within the park or from the neighbouring conservation area. The Council’s Heritage Advisor concluded the signs would have a neutral impact on the significant of the Old Town Conservation Area.

7.4 Impact on Neighbouring Residential Amenity / Public Safety

- 7.4.1 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2024) sets out that planning decision should ensure create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future residents. Paragraph 124 of the National Design Guide states that “*Good design promotes quality of life for the occupants and users of buildings. This includes function – buildings should be easy to use. It also includes comfort, safety, security, amenity, privacy, accessibility and adaptability*”. Paragraph 126 of the National Design Guide also emphasises that “*well-designed homes and communal areas within buildings provide a good standard and quality of internal space. This includes room sizes, floor-to-ceiling heights, internal and external storage, sunlight, daylight and ventilation. The quality of internal space needs careful consideration in higher density developments, particularly for family*

accommodation, where access, privacy, daylight and external amenity space are also important”.

- 7.4.2 Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan Partial Review (2024) are deemed to carry significant weight, this is because they generally reflect the good design principles outlined in the NPPF and National Design Guide, i.e., that these policies require developments do not adversely impact the amenities of neighbouring occupiers as a good design principle.
- 7.4.3 The closest residential dwellings to the application site are located to the north and north-east in Sish Lane. Their rear elevations vary between 60m and 70m from the northern elevation of the PlayZone and are separated by the Bowls Club, hockey pitch, and/or a car park.
- 7.4.4 Some disturbance may arise from the use of the PlayZone in terms of noise from people but this would be no different to the previous tennis court usage or the other existing uses of cricket, bowls, football or the children’s play area. In this regard, the impacts on residential amenities is considered to be within acceptable limits.
- 7.4.5 Turning to the floodlighting, the application is accompanied by lighting plans and assessments that conclude the light spillage from the lighting columns would not reach the rear gardens of the neighbouring properties and would not therefore give rise to harm to amenities inside the properties nor their private amenity spaces. Environmental Health have reviewed the application and advised that they raise no concerns or objections to the floodlighting subject to a condition being imposed to ensure the lighting is not left on overnight or when the court is not in use. The applicant has agreed to the wording of the condition to ensure lighting is off by 10pm, with a caveat that 1 light can remain on until 10.15pm to allow safe exit for people from the site.
- 7.4.6 In terms of the impact of the signage on the safety of the public, the signs are to be mounted flat to the fencing. There are no associated risks to public safety from the location of the signs. Given there would be no illumination, and located in a park away from vehicular highways, there is no significant risk to public safety. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in this regard as advised by Hertfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority.

7.5 Car Parking and Cycle Provision

- 7.5.1 Chapter 9. (Promoting Sustainable Transport) of the NPPF (2024) sets out a requirement to consider transport issues, which includes parking, at the earliest stages of a development proposal. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024) states *“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 would be severe.”*. Taking this into consideration, paragraph 117 of the NPPF (2024) stipulates that applications for development should:
- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – **so far as possible** – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
 - b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
 - c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
 - d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
 - e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

- 7.5.2 Policy IT5 of the Local Plan Partial Review (2024), which carries significant weight, requires development proposals to comply with the parking standards set out in the Stevenage Borough Council Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD 2020.
- 7.5.3 Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport, has been significantly updated. This policy requires, amongst other things, for developments to demonstrate they are in a sustainable location and will promote active travel by non-car modes of transport by providing appropriate cycle parking and prioritise public transport.
- 7.5.4 The application site lies towards the northern side of King George V Playing Fields, utilising an existing, vacant, tennis court. To the north of the application site is a pay and display, short-stay car park with 32 marked out parking spaces which has recently completed construction to improve the parking provision serving King George V site as a whole.
- 7.5.5 King George V Playing Fields has one vehicular access point off Sish Lane terminating in the aforementioned short stay car park. Additionally, there are at least 6 points of access for pedestrians across the whole of the park and two of the footpaths between Fairlands Way and Sish Lane/Ditchmore Lane are designated Public Rights of Way footpaths.
- 7.5.6 The proposal will add an additional playing pitch to the existing provision and in line with the adopted Parking Provision SPD, this pitch would require 20 spaces per pitch. The application comes forward with no additional provision to car parking.
- 7.5.7 However, it should be noted that the site is located in Zone 1 Accessibility Zone which allows for a provision of between zero and 25% of the maximum provision. Accordingly, coming forward with zero parking aligns with the Parking Provision SPD accessibility reductions.
- 7.5.8 Notwithstanding the above, the site is located within a 5-minute walk of The Forum surface car park and 10-minutes' walk of the Multi Storey Car Park on St Georges Way. As such, there are sufficient and suitable additional car parking available within a short distance of the site.
- 7.5.9 To the south of the site runs Fairlands Way which has a pedestrian footpath and adopted cycle track alongside it. There are no formally adopted cycle routes through the park although it is noted that many cyclists use the footpaths through the park, the legality of which is not a material planning consideration for this application.
- 7.5.10 The concerns from Cycling UK (Stevenage) regarding a lack of cycle route through the park are noted. Policy SP6(b) in the Local Plan Partial Review (2024) states that *"developments should first prioritise active travel in the layout of sites and by providing connections to surrounding pedestrian and cycle networks"*. The Policy wording does not require developers to provide new cycle routes, rather, they are to ensure that there are suitable connections to existing routes. Given the application site is within a long existing public park that has multiple footpaths traversing it, that already connect to the cycle network on Fairlands Way, there is no requirement on the developer to providing additional connections, and no requirement on the developer to create a new cycle route through the park.
- 7.5.11 The site is centrally located in the Town and has multiple excellent links to non-car modes of travel (including public transport) and is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard.
- 7.5.12 The Parking Provision SPD has no specific requirement for cycle storage for this type of application. The closest measure would be "other outdoor sports grounds" which has a requirement of 1 space per 10 players at the busiest period. There are no known figures for users of the proposed development but on the assumption that it could withstand a football match with 11 players a side then this would equate to 3 spaces. The submission shows the provision of 3 Sheffield stands to the south of the PlayZone and, following discussions with the applicant, details of suitable shelters has also been provided. These

can be secured via the imposition of a condition and as such the application is considered acceptable in this regard.

- 7.5.13 Turning now to highway safety, Herts County Council as Highways Authority (HA) initially raised concerns about the submitted Construction Management Plan (CMP) on the basis that there was no data on trip generation nor details of how construction vehicles could enter and exit the site in forward gear.
- 7.5.14 The applicant advised the HA through the Council that the trip generation would generally be low and would in any case be controlled through a booking system such that the Council has the ability to then control the number of persons on site at any one time and ensure there is no overload of the site, especially during events in the park.
- 7.5.15 The HA provided updated comments to advise that they raise no concerns or objections to the proposal but that they would require a new and updated CMP to include further details than that already submitted prior to commencement of development. This condition is considered reasonable to ensure site safety.
- 7.5.16 Taking all the aforementioned into account, the site is considered to be in a highly sustainable and central location that is well served by pedestrian and cycle routes. The application coming forward with no additional parking is acceptable and falls within the Zone 1 Accessibility Reductions applicable to the site.

7.6 Impact on the Environment

- 7.6.1 The application site is an area of hardstand within an existing park that prior to being a park was open fields. Therefore, there would be very low risk of contamination.
- 7.6.2 Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health section, they have raised no concerns from a land contamination perspective subject to the imposition of conditions. The conditions imposed would require a remediation strategy to be submitted for approval in the event that contamination is identified during the construction phase of development.

Groundwater

- 7.6.3 The application site is not located within a Source Protection Zone and the proposed development would not require the digging out of substantial foundations.

Air Quality

- 7.6.4 Policy FP7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that all development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Looking at air quality and air pollution specifically, The Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2019 by Stevenage Borough Council identifies that the development site is not located within, or near, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- 7.6.5 Given the type of development, it is not considered that there would be harmful impacts arising from construction.
- 7.6.6 With regards to the operational aspect of the development, due to its limited scale, the proposed development would give rise to a very small increase in NO₂ emissions which, in accordance with IAQM/EPUK guidance, is identified as having a negligible impact at all receptors in the area. As such, the need for additional mitigation has not been identified as being required.

Noise Pollution

- 7.6.7 With respect to noise, Policy FP8: Pollution Sensitive Uses stipulates that planning permission for pollution sensitive uses will be granted where they will not be subjected to unacceptably high levels of pollution exposure from either existing, or proposed pollution generating uses.

- 7.6.8 Dealing firstly with the impact of noise from the construction phase of the development, detailed measures will be required in the CMP. Through the CMP the hours in which noisy activities take place are to be controlled along with the imposition of relevant mitigation measures being put in place to minimise the impact of noise from construction activities. Moreover, if a breach were to take place, the Council can enforce the condition accordingly. Consequently, the imposition of such a condition is supported by the Council's Environmental Health Section.
- 7.6.9 With regards to noise which could arise during the operational phase of development, if any complaints arose regarding future occupiers, these would be dealt with by the Borough Council's Environmental Health department.

Light Pollution

- 7.6.10 In terms of light pollution, Policy FP7: Pollution of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires all development proposals should minimise, where possible, light pollution. Applications for development where pollution is suspected must contain sufficient information for the application to make a full assessment on impacts. Planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on:
- a) the natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area which includes light pollution;
 - b) health and safety of the public; and
 - c) The compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.
- 7.6.11 Turning to the operational side of the development, Environmental Health have assessed the application and advised that they have no objections or concerns to the flood lighting subject to conditions controlling their hours of operation. This is because the submitted plans and documents evidence that the light from the floodlights will not reach neighbouring residential gardens nor the habitable rooms within the dwellings.
- 7.6.12 In terms of lighting associated with the construction aspect of the proposed development, this is dealt with as part of a Construction Management Plan.

7.7 Trees and Landscaping

- 7.7.1 Policy NH5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within the development site and should include new planting where appropriate.
- 7.7.2 The application site consists of a vacant hardstand within the park, formerly used as a tennis court. No part of the application site includes tree or any soft landscaping.

7.8 Biodiversity, Ecology and Protected Species

- 7.8.1 Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sets out that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the 'biodiversity gain condition' requiring development to achieve a net gain of 10% of biodiversity value. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not apply in some circumstances.
- 7.8.2 Applicants for planning permission are required to make a statement as to whether the biodiversity gain condition will apply if permission is granted, and, if it does not apply, under which exemption they are applying.
- 7.8.3 There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not apply. Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity

gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption or transitional arrangement is considered to apply.

1. Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:
 - a) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
 - b) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

7.9 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

- 7.9.1 Consideration has been given to Articles 1 and 8 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is not considered that the decision would result in a violation of any person's rights under the Convention.
- 7.9.2 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.
- 7.9.3 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 7.9.4 The Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.9.5 The application site, and King George V Playing Fields as a whole, has been designed to be level access throughout for disabled users and other forms of wheeled articles such as pushchairs and bicycles.
- 7.9.6 It is considered that the decision has had regard to this duty. The development would not conflict with either Stevenage Borough Council's Equality Policy or the commitments set out in our Equality Objectives and would support the Council in meeting its statutory equality responsibilities.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact upon the visual amenity of the King George V Playing Fields and the identified harm to the neighbouring Old Town Conservation Area is significantly outweighed by the substantial health and social public benefits of the development through the provision of an additional recreational facility. It does not affect the form and function of the Principal Open Space and there is sufficient parking and alternative means of access to serve the proposed development.

9. RECOMMENDATION FOR 25/00894/FP

- 9.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions.

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS/REASONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
MCA-MUK3521-01-D; MCA-MUK3521-02; MCA-MUK3521-03-A; MCA-MUK3521-04;
MCA-MUK3521-05; MCA-MUK3521-06; MCA-MUK3521-07-A; MCA-MUK3521-08;
MCA-MUK3521-09-A; MCA-MUK3521-10;
REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 3 The external materials used in the development to which this permission relates shall be those detailed on the approved plans and in the accompanying planning submission documents unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.
- 4 In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the local planning authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme a verification report must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.
REASON:- To ensure that the site does not pose any risk to human health and to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable concentrations of pollution posing a risk to public water supply from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site and to prevent deterioration of groundwater and/or surface water by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is completed.
- 5 No demolition or construction work which is audible at the site boundary relating to this permission shall be carried out on any Sunday, Public or Bank Holiday nor at any other time, except between the hours of 07:30 and 18:00 on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 08:00 and 13:00 on Saturdays.
REASON:- To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- 6 The floodlights hereby permitted shall be shut off by 22:00 hours. One light column is permitted to remain on until 22:15 to allow the multi-use games area to be vacated safely.
REASON:- To ensure that the floodlights and users of the multi-use games area facility do not cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring residents.
- 7 The PlayZone hereby permitted shall not come into recreational use until suitable secure cycling storage facilities in accordance with the approved plans and documents have been installed.
REASON:- To ensure that adequate cycle parking is provided in accordance with the Council's adopted supplementary planning documents.
- 8 The PlayZone hereby permitted shall not come into recreational use until a written Noise Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The contents of the Plan shall set out the physical and managerial measures for the control of noise associated with the facility. Thereafter, all agreed measures shall be maintained in perpetuity.
REASON:- To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential dwellings

- 9 No development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the highway. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shall include details of:
- a. Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing.
 - b. Access arrangements to the site.
 - c. Measure to minimise dust, noise machinery and traffic noise impacts during construction.
 - d. Screening and hoarding details to protect neighbouring residents.
 - e. Traffic management requirements, including the location of routes and from the site, details of their signing monitoring and enforcement measures.
 - f. Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading /unloading and turning areas);
 - g. Siting and details of wheel washing facilities.
 - h. Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway including end of day tidying procedures to ensure protection of the site out the hours of construction. The construction activities shall be designed and undertake in accordance with the code of best practice set out in BS 5228 1997 and the agreed details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA and Highways.
 - i. Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times.
 - j. Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities.
 - k. Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway.
 - l. where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding, pedestrian routes, and remaining road width for vehicle movements.

REASON:- In the interests of highway safety.

The Council has acted Pro-Actively for the following reason:-

- 1 Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

INFORMATIVE

1 Public Information on Planning Applications

Warning: all information provided on your planning application is now publicly available. Individuals and organisations offering their services may contact you. The Council does not endorse or approve any builders, surveyors, trades persons or other supplier, and advises householders to obtain quotes/references, and check the legitimacy of any contractor who contacts them before making payment.

2 Community Infrastructure Levy

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020.

This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk.

3 **Building Regulations**

To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk or phoning us on 01438 879990.

To make a building regulations application please apply through our website portal at <https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/contact-us/> payment can be made online or by phoning the above number after the application has been uploaded. Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control for fees guidance on 01438 879990.

Hertfordshire Building Control can also be contacted by post at Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6AE.

Once a building regulations application has been deposited with relevant drawings and fee building work may commence. You will be advised in their acknowledgement letter of the work stages we need to inspect but in most instances these are usually:

- Excavation for foundations
- Damp proof course
- Concrete oversite
- Insulation
- Drains (when laid or tested)
- Floor and Roof construction
- Work relating to fire safety
- Work affecting access and facilities for disabled people
- Completion

Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control on 01438 879990 before 10.00am to ensure a same day inspection (Mon - Fri).

4 **Party Wall etc. Act 1996**

Any work that affects a party wall, including foundations dug within 3.0m of a neighbouring building, may be controllable under the Act and may require approval from the adjoining owner(s). Party Wall Act matters are always civil matters and it is neither Stevenage Borough Council's nor Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd's remit to control or enforce Party Wall act matters. Please refer to the Government's explanatory booklet The Party Wall etc. Act 1996, a copy of which is available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-party-wall-etc-act-1996-revised-explanatory-booklet>

5 **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Applications where Biodiversity Net Gain is not required as development is considered De Minimis

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:

- a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be Stevenage Borough Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption or transitional arrangement is considered to apply.

1. Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:
 - a) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
 - b) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Where the local planning authority considers that the permission falls within paragraph 19 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the permission which has been granted has the effect of requiring or permitting the development to proceed in phases. The modifications in respect of the biodiversity gain condition which are set out in Part 2 of the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Modifications and Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 apply.

Biodiversity gain plans are required to be submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority before development may be begun, and, if subject to phased development, before each phase of development may be begun.

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans. The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include, in addition to information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise any adverse effect of the development on the habitat, information on arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat. The planning authority can only approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if satisfied that the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat is minimised and appropriate arrangements have been made for the purpose of compensating for any impact which do not include the use of biodiversity credits.

More information can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>

10. RECOMMENDATION FOR 25/00895/AD

10.1 That advertisement consent be GRANTED subject to the following conditions.

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS/REASONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
MCA-MUK3521-01-D; MCA-MUK3521-02; MCA-MUK3521-03-A; MCA-MUK3521-04;
MCA-MUK3521-05; MCA-MUK3521-06; MCA-MUK3521-07-A; MCA-MUK3521-08;
MCA-MUK3521-09-A; MCA-MUK3521-10;
REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning
- 2 A. No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.

B. No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to:-
 - i) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
 - ii) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
 - iii) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

C. Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

D. Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

E. Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

REASON:-In accordance with Regulation 14 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference numbers relating to these items.
2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision adopted February 2025, Stevenage Design Guide adopted February 2025.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 adopted 2019.
4. Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 adopted May 2019.
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 and Planning Practice Guidance.