

**Meeting:** Planning and Development Agenda Item:  
Committee

**Date:** 30 June 2026

**Author:** Ailsa Davis

**Lead Officer:** Alex Robinson

**Contact Officer:** Ailsa Davis

**Application No :** 26/00301/FP

**Location :** Eastern Side of Stevenage Railway Station, Lytton Way, Stevenage

**Proposal :** Proposed installation of a memorial bronze sculpture of Nala the cat

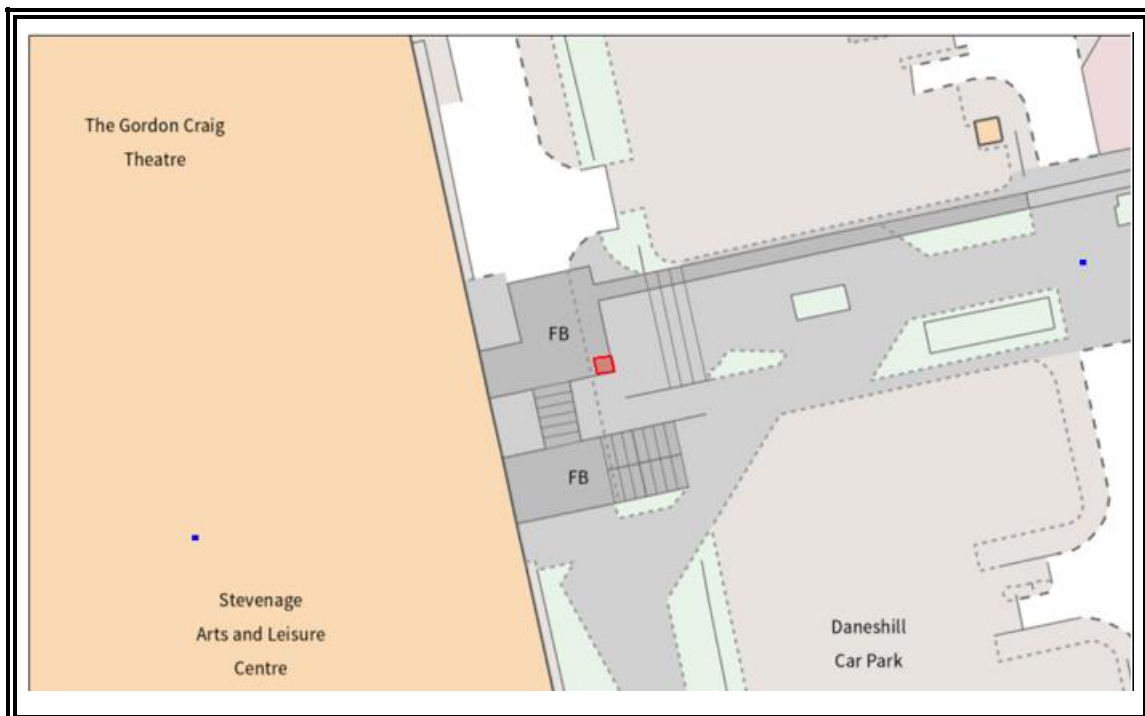
**Drawing Nos.:** Site Location Plan; Design Proposal

**Applicant :** Stevenage Borough Council

**Agent:** N/A

**Date Valid:** 17 April 2026

**Recommendation:** GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



## **1. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 1.1 The application site comprises a hard surfaced 0.5m<sup>2</sup> elevated area at the top of the ramp leading to the pedestrian bridge over Lytton Way. The site is enclosed by railings and lies adjacent to the Gordon Craig theatre. It is visible from the railway station to the west and given its elevated position, is also visible from Daneshill carpark, London Road (path) and Danesgate below.

## **2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 2.1 None.

## **3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION**

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for the installation of a memorial bronze sculpture of Nala the cat. Nala frequently visited and spent time at Stevenage railway station and became a firm favourite of travellers passing through and residents alike. Nala became more widely known through social media.
- 3.2 Following her passing in December 2025, it is proposed to erect a memorial sculpture of Nala sitting on a tall stainless-steel pedestal looking down towards the theatre entrance. The pedestal would resemble a station ticket barrier. At the top of the pedestal would be a small, circular bronze plaque with raised polished lettering. Nala herself would be made of two-tone bronze patina to show colour patches to help make it a good likeness. The base of the sculpture would measure 30 x 20cm and would be 1.7m in height.
- 3.3 The application comes before the Planning Committee as the applicant is Stevenage Borough Council.

## **4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

- 4.1 Following notification of the application via the erection of a site notice, at the time of writing this report 331no. public representations have been received in support of the statue. Some representations have been received from people living as far away as the US and Australia. One general comment has been received objecting if the sculpture is being publicly funded and questioning why people have commented who do not live in Stevenage.

## **5. CONSULTATIONS**

### **5.1. SBC Highway Engineers**

No comment.

## **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

### **6.1 The Development Plan**

- 6.1.1 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. For Stevenage, the statutory development plan comprises the following documents:

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2019)
- The Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (adopted 2012)
- The Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (adopted 2014)
- The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016 (adopted 2007)

## **6.2 National Planning Policy Framework**

- 6.2.1 The latest revision of the NPPF was published in December 2024. The policies it contains are material considerations which will be taken into account in dealing with applications. Due weight will be given to development plan policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

## **6.3 Planning Practice Guidance**

- 6.3.1 The Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”), with which Members are fully familiar, is an online resource containing guidance supplementing the NPPF. The PPG is a material consideration which should be taken into account in determining planning applications.

## **6.4 National Design Guide**

- 6.4.1 The National Design Guide 2021 is Government guidance on the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It has the same status as the PPG and should similarly be taken into account when determining planning applications.

## **6.5 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 2019)**

- 6.5.1 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in 2019. Weight must be given to the policies it contains according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

- 6.5.2 Those policies relevant to the application proposal are:

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Policy SP2: Sustainable Development in Stevenage

Policy SP8: Good design

Policy GD1: High quality design

Policy TC1: Town Centre

Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area

Policy IT4: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

- 6.5.3 It is considered they are consistent with the NPPF and carry significant weight.

## **6.6 Local Plan Review and Update (2024)**

- 6.6.1 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).

- 6.6.2 In response to the review, the council has proposed a partial update of the local plan. Weight must be given to the emerging policies in the partial update according to: a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan; b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the policies; and c) the degree of consistency between the policies and the most recent revision of the NPPF.

- 6.6.3. At the time of writing, the partial update has been through examination by the Secretary of State, and the major modifications consultation has closed. The partial update is scheduled to be adopted in July 2026 and is therefore at an advanced stage of preparation. 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.

## **6.7 Supplementary Planning Documents**

6.7.1 The following supplementary planning documents are relevant to determining the application:

- Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (February 2025)

## **6.8 Community Infrastructure Levy**

6.8.1 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. This proposal is not CIL liable.

# **7. APPRAISAL**

7.1 The main issues in the assessment of the application are the principle of development, design and visual impact, impact on residential amenity, highway safety and biodiversity net gain.

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 Policy SP2 of the Local Plan provides that planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate, how amongst other matters they will:

- Regenerate areas of the town that are under performing
- Make good use of land and maximise opportunities for brownfield redevelopment in the town
- Improve quality of life and make sure that residents share in the benefits of regeneration; Promote journeys by bus
- Make high quality buildings and spaces that respect and improve their surroundings; and Support facilities that encourage people to live, work and spend leisure time in Stevenage

7.2.2 Looking at the site itself in terms of its allocation in the Local Plan, it is located in Stevenage Town Centre as identified under Policy TC1 in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2019) and Local Plan Partial Update. More specifically, the site is designated as falling within the Central Core MOA under Policy TC5. Neither of these policies have been amended within the partial update. Within the Central Core Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;
- b. New Use Class E(a), E(b) and sui generis shop, bar, restaurant and cafe uses;
- c. New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- d. New Use Class E(g)(i) office premises;
- e. New Use Class F.1 and E(d) leisure, cultural and civic uses, including a replacement theatre and museum; and
- f. Signature public spaces

- 7.2.3 The proposed development would not only act as a memorial sculpture but would help create a signature public space in front of the theatre and the key pedestrian route to the railway station from the town centre. It would also contribute to the wider public realm works which have been delivered as part of the Bus Interchange development to the south and deliver an enhanced arrival experience as you enter the town centre from the station.
- 7.2.4 Given the above, the principle of the sculpture sited in this location is considered acceptable. It would accord with the core planning principles outlined in the NPPF (2024) as well as the policies contained in the Local Plan (2019) and Local Plan Partial Update.

### **7.3 Design and visual impact**

- 7.3.1 Chapter 12. (Achieving well-designed places) of the NPPF (2024) stipulates that the creation of high quality 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 Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan (2019) and Local Plan Partial Update as amended are deemed to carry significant weight, this is because they generally reflect the good design principles outlined in the NPPF and National Design Guide.
- 7.3.3 It is considered the use of stainless steel and bronze for the sculpture would be a high-quality material choice and would appear in keeping with the railings and platform on which it would be sited. The height of 1.7m would not appear overbearing and it is acknowledged has been specifically chosen so Nala would appear to be sitting on top of the railings when viewed from public car park below.
- 7.3.4 There would be space on the platform for people to have a moment with Nala, with good sightlines from all sides. The design drawing shows how Nala would look down at the theatre entrance, which would give the sculpture a dynamic relationship with the wider area.
- 7.3.5 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would be of a high quality and suitably respectful of its surroundings. In these respects, the proposal accords with the relevant policies of the local plan and partial update.

### **7.4 Impact on Residential Amenity**

- 7.4.1 Paragraph 96 of the NPPF (2024) requires planning decisions to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places. Policy GD1 of the Local Plan requires proposals not to adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring uses or the surrounding area. This requirement is also reflected in the Council's Design Guide SPD (2025). In the emerging partial update of the local plan, Policy GD1 is amended to refer to "unacceptable adverse impacts" on neighbouring amenities. This change is proposed to reflect the fact that in some instances, impacts on amenities may be deemed to be acceptable despite being adverse. The emerging policy is afforded significant weight, and the proposal is considered to comply with it.
- 7.4.2 Whilst there are residential properties which lie near the application site, it is not considered the proposal would result in any adverse impacts on residential amenity in accordance with the NPPF (2024), Policy GD1 of the Local Plan (2019) and Local Plan Partial Update as well as the Council's Design Guide SPD (2025).

## 7.5 Highway Safety

- 7.5.1 Policy IT4(a) of the Local Plan (2019) stipulates that planning permission will be granted where development would not have an adverse impact upon highway safety (including pedestrian safety). This policy now refers to an unacceptable adverse impact upon highway safety within the Local Plan Partial Update to align more closely with the NPPF. Policy GD1(b) seeks to improve the overall ease of movement within an area for all users. There has been no change to criterion b of policy GD1 under the Local Plan Partial Update which still seeks to improve overall ease of movement.
- 7.5.2 The proposed sculpture would be located within the existing elevated public realm area adjacent to the theatre and walkway to the station. The sculpture would be out of the way of the flow of pedestrians and would cause no nuisance or obstruction. It has been positioned so persons using wheelchairs and pushchairs would remain unhindered when using the existing ramp and elevated walkway. In addition, they would also be able to freely pass and re-pass through the wider public open space.
- 7.5.3 With regards to the operation of the wider highway network, the sculpture could only be accessed by foot and would be positioned away from the trafficked highway of Lytton Way and Danesgate. Moreover, the sculpture would also be well screened from view from Lytton Way by the existing theatre building. Given this, the sculpture would not act as a form of distraction to users of the trafficked highway and therefore, would not prejudice the safe operation of the highway network.

## 7.6 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.6.1 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.
- 7.6.2 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.
- 7.6.3 Based on the information available this proposal 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).

## 7.7 Other Matters

### Funding and Maintenance

- 7.7.1 The proposed sculpture has been funded by [Fundraiser by Tara Hood : A Memorial Statue for Nala - Our beloved train station cat](#). The funder is independent of the owners of the cat. The artist creating the sculpture is doing it for free and the funds raised are for the materials. The sculpture would be periodically cleaned by the Council.

## Community Infrastructure Levy

7.7.2 The Council adopted CIL on 1 April 2020 and the CIL Charging Schedule specifies a payment for new floorspace in line with the following rates (plus appropriate indexation):

Development Type	CIL Rate (£ per square meter)	
	Zone 1: Stevenage Central, Stevenage West Urban Extension and North of Stevenage Extension	Zone 2: Everywhere else
Residential		
Market housing	£40/m <sup>2</sup>	£100/m <sup>2</sup>
Sheltered housing	£100/m <sup>2</sup>	
Extra care housing	£40/m <sup>2</sup>	
Retail development	£60/m <sup>2</sup>	
All other development	£0/m <sup>2</sup>	

7.7.3 CIL is a non-negotiable charge. The exact charge will be determined by the Council's CIL officer after an application has been granted in accordance with the CIL Charging Schedule and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). Opportunities for relief or exemption from the CIL charge exist and will be taken into account in the calculation of the final CIL charge.

7.7.4 CIL replaces the need for S106 agreements to specify financial and/or land contributions for non-site-specific infrastructure projects. This allows infrastructure to be planned on a borough-wide scale rather than on a site-by-site basis as mitigation against the impacts of individual proposals. A CIL Form 1: Additional Information has been submitted along with the application. The sculpture would not be CIL liable.

## **7.8 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

7.8.1 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.

7.8.2 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.

7.8.3 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.

7.8.4 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.

- 7.8.5 In terms of inclusive access, the sculpture could be accessed via the existing ramp leading up to the platform from the town centre and via lift access from the station. It would therefore be fully accessible for wheelchair users and pushchairs.

## 8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is an appropriate design and scale, would not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the area, amenity of neighbours or the safety and operation of the highway network.
- 8.2 Taking national and local planning policies into account, and regarding all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

## 9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the conditions set out below and delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of the Planning and Development Committee, to amend or add to the conditions subject to which the permission would be granted, where such amendments or additions would satisfy the relevant national policy tests and would most effectively deliver the development which the Committee has resolved to approve.

### SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS/REASONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:  
Sculpture Design Proposal by Ben Twiston-Davies;  
**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).

### 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 **Building Regulations**  
To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at [building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk](mailto: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).

## 2 **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. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 1 The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item. Online copies may be obtained at <https://publicaccess.stevenage.gov.uk/online-applications/>
- 2 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan>
- 3 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update 2025  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-partial-update/submission-to-secretary-of-state>
- 4 Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD 2025; Design Guidance SPD 2025; Developer Contributions SPD 2025.  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-library>
- 5 Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan LTP4 2018-2031  
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/ltp4-local-transport-plan-4-complete.pdf>
- 5 Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and the Planning Practice Guidance.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF\\_December\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- 7 Representations made by statutory consultees and other interested parties referred to in this report. Online copies can be found on Public Access.