

Meeting: Planning and Development Committee **Agenda Item:**
Date: 4 August 2026
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Lead Officer: Alex Robinson
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Application No : 26/00408/FP
Location : Land To The West Of The Tarmac Tennis Courts King George V Playing Field
Proposal : Installation of Space Age Musical Pavilion
Drawing Nos.: Block Plan; Y26-136-GA1 Rev A; Site Location Plan;
Applicant : Emily Peasgood Studio Ltd
Agent: SBC Regeneration Department
Date Valid: 28 May 2026
Recommendation: GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



For illustrative purposes only

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site falls within the King George V Playing fields, to the west of the tennis courts, south of the Millennium Gardens and to the north of the cricket club. King George V Playing Fields is designated as a principal Open Space. The site also lies in close proximity to the Old Town Conservation Area.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 25/00894/FP Construction of 3G non-infill floodlit play zone, including hard standing area and sports fencing. 23.02.2026 PER
- 2.2 25/00895/AD Display of 13no. non illuminated vinyl banners to play zone 23.02.2026 ADGRAN
- 2.3 26/00198/COND Discharge of conditions 8 (Noise Management Plan); and 9 (Construction Traffic Management Plan) attached to planning permission reference number 25/00894/FP 16.04.2026 DISCHA
- 2.4 26/00443/COND Discharge of condition 9 (Construction Traffic Management Plan) attached to planning permission reference number 25/00894/FP. PCO

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for the installation of a public sculpture.
- 3.2 The application has been referred to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision. This is because the agent and landowner is Stevenage Borough Council.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 Following notification of the application via the erection of site notices, no public representations have been received.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1. BEAMS (the Council's heritage Advisor)

The grey galvanised steel structure is open sided and relatively small scale; it will not look out of place adjacent to the Play Area and Tennis Courts. The piece of public art is an interesting concept and will preserve the setting, and significance, of the Stevenage Old Town Conservation Area in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy.

5.2. SBC Green Spaces Team

No comments received.

5.3. SBC Arboricultural Manager

No comments received.

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 (updated 2026)
- 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 (Updated 2026)

- 6.5.1 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in 2019 and partially updated in 2026. 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. The policies most relevant to determining this application are:

Policy SP8: Good Design
 Policy IT5: Parking and access
 Policy GD1: High quality design
 Policy NH1: Principal Open Space
 Policy NH10: Conservation Areas

- 6.5.3 All of these policies are considered to be fully consistent with the NPPF.

6.6 Supplementary Planning Documents

- 6.6.1 The following supplementary planning documents are relevant to determining the application:
- Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (February 2025);

6.7 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.7.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted its revised Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL2) Charging Schedule 22 July 2026. 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 application are the impact on the visual amenities of the area, impact on neighbouring amenities, and impact on the environment.

- 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 NH1 identifies sites which are designated as Principal Open Spaces. This site is recognised as a Principal Park under NH1/3 for King George V Playing Fields.

- 7.2.2 The policy recognises that planning permission will be granted where proposals “Would not result in the loss of any part of a Principal Open Space, would not have an adverse impact upon any Principal Open Space within, or adjacent to, the application site; and reasonably provide, or reasonably contribute towards, the maintenance or improvement of, Principal Open Spaces and allotments.”

- 7.2.3 King George V Playing Fields is recognised as providing a wider than local role within the town, providing open space, children’s play area, and a variety of sporting pitches (such as football, cricket, hockey, tennis etc). The installation of a public sculpture of this size and scale is not considered to result in the loss of any of the Principal Open Space, and nor would it have any adverse impact upon the Principal Open Space or its use.

- 7.2.4 The installation of Public Art within the area would reasonably contribute to the Principal Open Space. The proposal accords with Policy NH1 and the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

7.3 Design and visual impact, including impact on setting of heritage assets

- 7.3.1 Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan require developments to respect and make a positive contribution to its surroundings. Policies SP13 and NH10 of the adopted local plan require developments affecting conservation areas to be determined in accordance with national policy, having regard to any relevant conservation area management plan.

- 7.3.2 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas in the exercise of their functions, whilst Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2024) requires Local Planning Authorities to place great weight on preserving historic assets and their significance. Paragraph 213 states: '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.

- 7.3.3 The proposed sculpture would be 5m in diameter on the ground, 6.1m in diameter across the roof, with an overall height of 3.8m and constructed of galvanised steel which will weather naturally over time to a muted grey tone.
- 7.3.4 It has been designed to produce sound in response to rain in much the same way as wind chimes produce sound in response to wind. Water would be collected across the canopy roof and be directed through a system of tuned tongue drums that produce subtle and low-level ambient sound.
- 7.3.5 It would be sited on the open grass area adjacent to the tarmac tennis courts and would not obstruct any footpaths or sports pitches or children's play spaces. The Design and Access Statement sets out the design rationale by the designer – it is designed to sit lightly within the open landscape, its open-sided form maintains visual permeability and allows uninterrupted movements through the space, integrating comfortably with its surroundings.
- 7.3.6 The structure provides informal shelter and seating, encouraging people to pause, gather, and engage with the space. Its circular arrangement supports flexible use, allowing individuals and groups to occupy the pavilion in different ways, while maintaining an inclusive and accessible environment.
- 7.3.7 The Council's Heritage advisor, BEAMS, has assessed the application and raised no objections or concerns. They conclude that the development would preserve the character of the conservation area in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and Policy SP13 of the Local Plan. Officers find no reason to disagree with this assessment.
- 7.3.8 In this regard, the proposal is considered acceptable as it complies with the relevant Local Plan policies and the NPPF.

7.4 Impact on Neighbouring residential amenity

- 7.4.1 Policy GD1 of the local plan requires that development does not lead to an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.
- 7.4.2 The nearest residential dwellings would be the houses and flats in Lintott Close, Sish Lane which are in excess of 70m from the application site and separated from the site by the Bowls Club.
- 7.4.3 Due to the significant separation distance combined with the fact that the sculpture would be ground mounted and would not result in excessive noise and no odour emissions, it is not considered the proposal would harm the amenities of the nearest residential properties.
- 7.4.4 In terms of impact on the surrounding area, the site falls within the King George V laying Fields which is well used for sports and children's play areas. Following construction, it is unlikely that any noise arising from the sculpture would be above and beyond that which occurs through users of the park already. Therefore, the proposal would not harm amenities more generally and in this respect, it accords with Policy GD1.

7.5 Impact on the Environment

- 7.5.1 The sculpture has the potential to be an interesting and valuable addition to the park, contributing positively to the visitor experience and overall character of the space. The interactive nature of the proposal is welcomed, subject to appropriate durability and longevity considerations.

- 7.5.2 No comments have been received from the Leisure and Green Spaces Team.
- 7.5.3 The proposal is outlined to be constructed from durable materials which will be resistant to impact and will generally be low maintenance. There will be sufficient surveillance that will remain following installation of the sculpture. It is located in a highly visible location and is not secluded, so the site retains the wider visibility it benefits from currently.

7.6 Biodiversity, Ecology and Protected Species

- 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 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

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 7.7.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted its revised Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL2) Charging Schedule 22 July 2026. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floor space of a development. Due to the nature of the proposed development, there is no CIL liability.

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 The proposal does not affect the accessibility into the King George V Playing Fields, nor would it affect members of the public, including those covered by the Equalities Act. The proposed development is not considered therefore to have any material impact on persons with any of the protected characteristics listed under the Equalities Act.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 To conclude, the principle of the proposed development is acceptable as it would support the operation and maintenance of the King George V Playing Fields. Furthermore, it would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and the wider site and would not detract from the visual amenities of the area. The proposal would not cause harm to the amenities of the nearest residential properties.
- 8.2 Given the aforementioned, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in line with the Council adopted Local Plan (updated 2026), Design Guide SPD (2025), the NPPF (2024) and Planning Practice Guide.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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:
Block Plan; Y26-136-GA1 Rev A; Site Location Plan;
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.

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 its revised Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL2) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 10 June 2026 and started implementing SCIL2 on 22 July 2026.

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 may be imposed. NB, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted SCIL2 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. 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://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.