

Application Number	19/01112/AS	
Location	Station Road Car Park, Station Road, Ashford, Kent	
Grid Reference	01284/42624	
Parish Council	None	
Ward	Victoria Ward	
Application Description	Outline application for the erection multi-storey car park (five storeys and up to 500 spaces) over existing surface car park to consider access and scale	
Applicant	Ashford Borough Council c/o agent	
Agent	Mr M Blythin, DHA Planning, Eclipse House, Eclipse Park, Sittingbourne Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 3EN	
Site Area	0.45 hectares	
(a)	(b)	(c)

Introduction

1. This application is reported to the Planning Committee because the Council is both the landowner and applicant.

Site and Surroundings

2. The application site comprises an area of hardstanding approximately 0.45 hectares in size and is located within the town centre of Ashford.
3. The site currently serves as one of the town centre public car parks, being located approximately 5 minutes walking distance to the main town centre. The car park is owned and operated by the Council.
4. The Ashford Green corridor is located immediately to the east of the site (highlighted green in figure 1. below), to the west and north approximately 70 metres away at its closest point is the Ashford town centre Conservation Area (as shown in pink in figure 1 below).

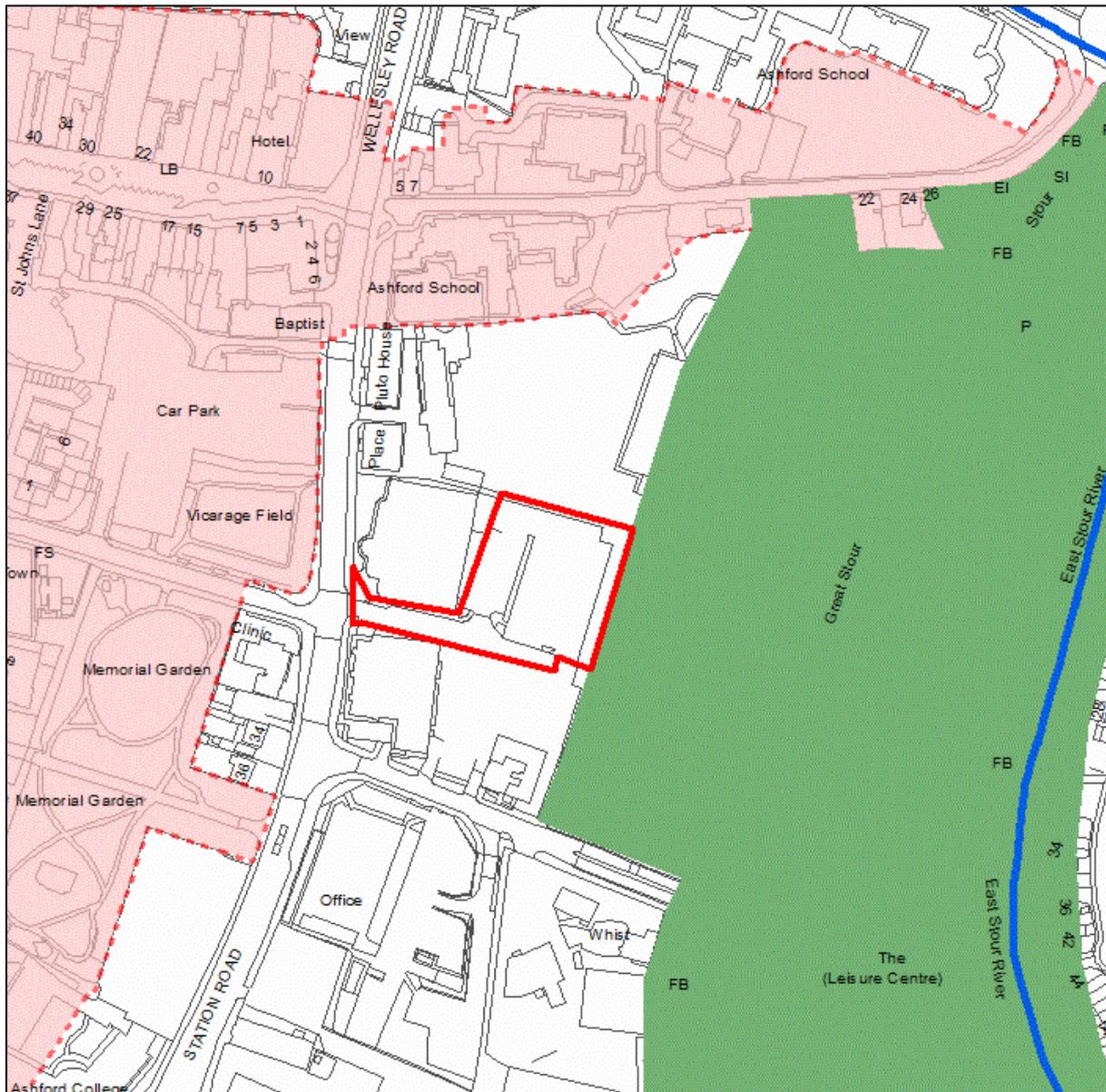


Figure 1: Site location – site outlined in red

5. There is green open space to the east and north as can be seen in the aerial view in figure 2. below. This land forms part of the playing fields/sports pitches of Ashford School. To the south and east is a bowling alley and office buildings and their associated car parking. The site slopes downwards towards the east toward the River Stour.



Figure 2: Site location

6. There are existing trees located to the western, northern and eastern boundaries and there is a narrow strip of grassland immediately behind the bowling alley. There are boundary hedges to the north and east of the car park.
7. The site is located within floodzone 1 (less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding).

8. The site is accessed via Station Road which is a short section of highway from the A2042 Station Road. The junction with the A2042 Station Road is a signalised junction.
9. The car park is a surface car park operated as a pay and display facility for up to 120 vehicles, 10 of which are reserved for disabled parking. The existing car park is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Proposal

10. Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of a multi-storey car park with access and scale being considered at this point.
11. Should the application be permitted, landscaping, layout and appearance will all be matters for future consideration as application/s for reserved matters.
12. The proposal would replace the existing surface level car park of 120 parking spaces with a new multi-storey car park which would provide up to 500 parking spaces. It is proposed that the development would be 5 storeys in height, the top floor would be covered.
13. Of the proposed 500 spaces, 24 are proposed to provide disabled parking spaces. It is also proposed that 120 spaces would be fitted with electric vehicle charging points and the remaining bays would be future proofed as passive bays allowing for their easy conversion to provide the same charging facilities.
14. Access to the site will remain from Station Road, with the junction widened to accommodate a two lane exit, separating the left and right turning traffic. The entrance to the car park for both pedestrians and vehicles is proposed to the south western corner. Whilst the design of the building is not considered as part of this application as it is a matter reserved for a future planning application, it is envisaged that this corner would be marked by a design feature.
15. Photovoltaic panels are proposed to the roof of the building.

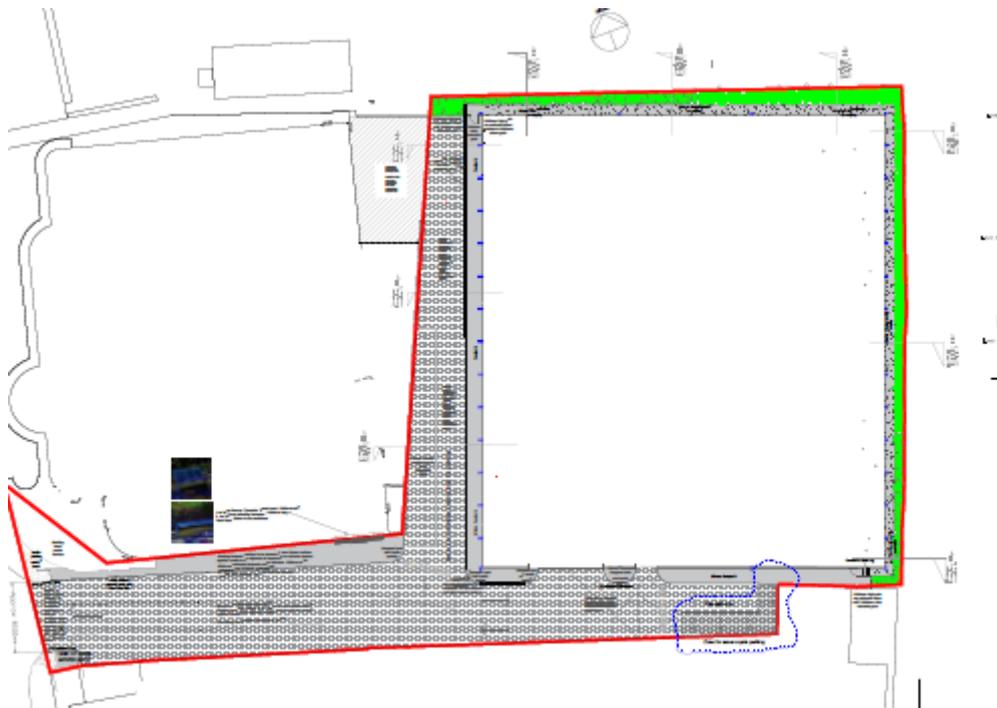


Figure 3: Proposed site plan



Figure 4: Proposed development showing scale

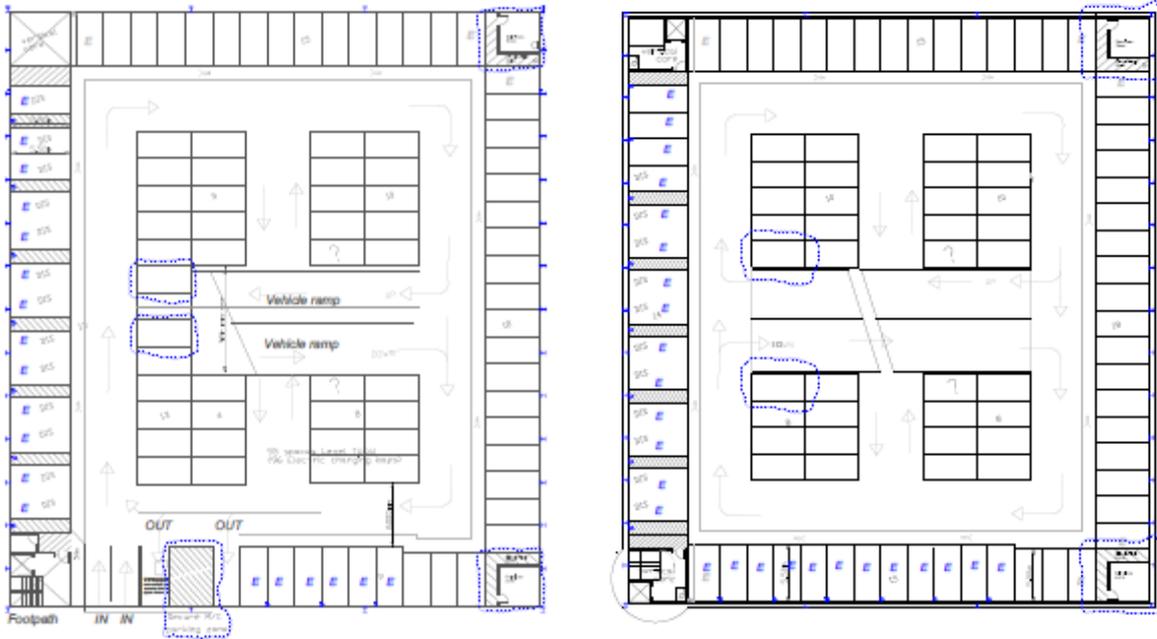


Figure 5: Indicative ground and first floor layout

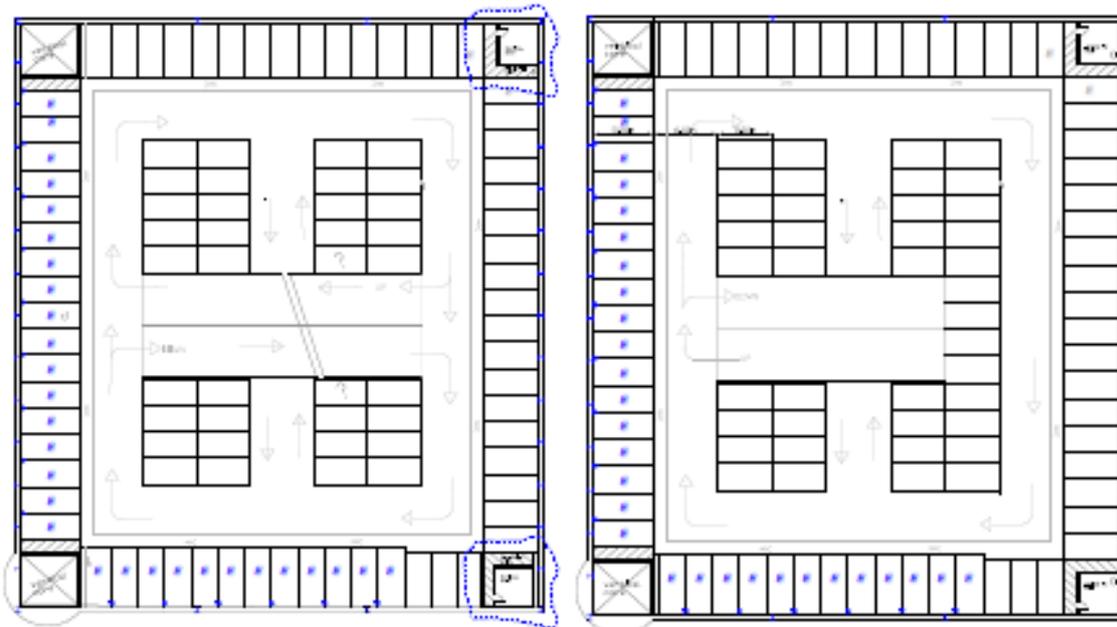


Figure 6: Indicative levels 2/3 and 4

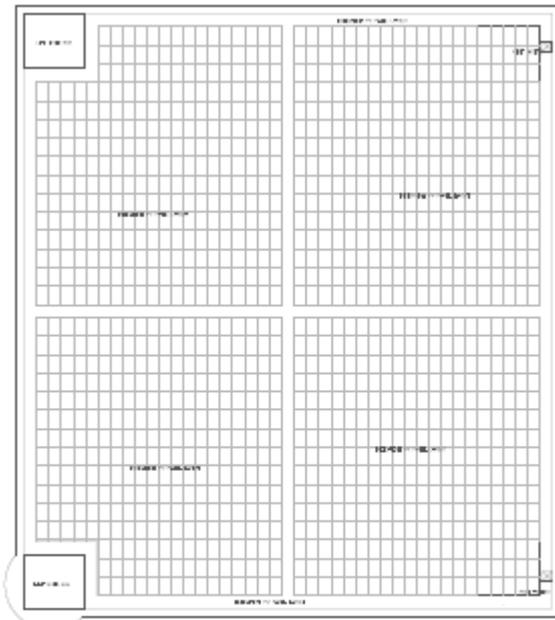


Figure 7: Indicative roof plan with indicative PV panel layout

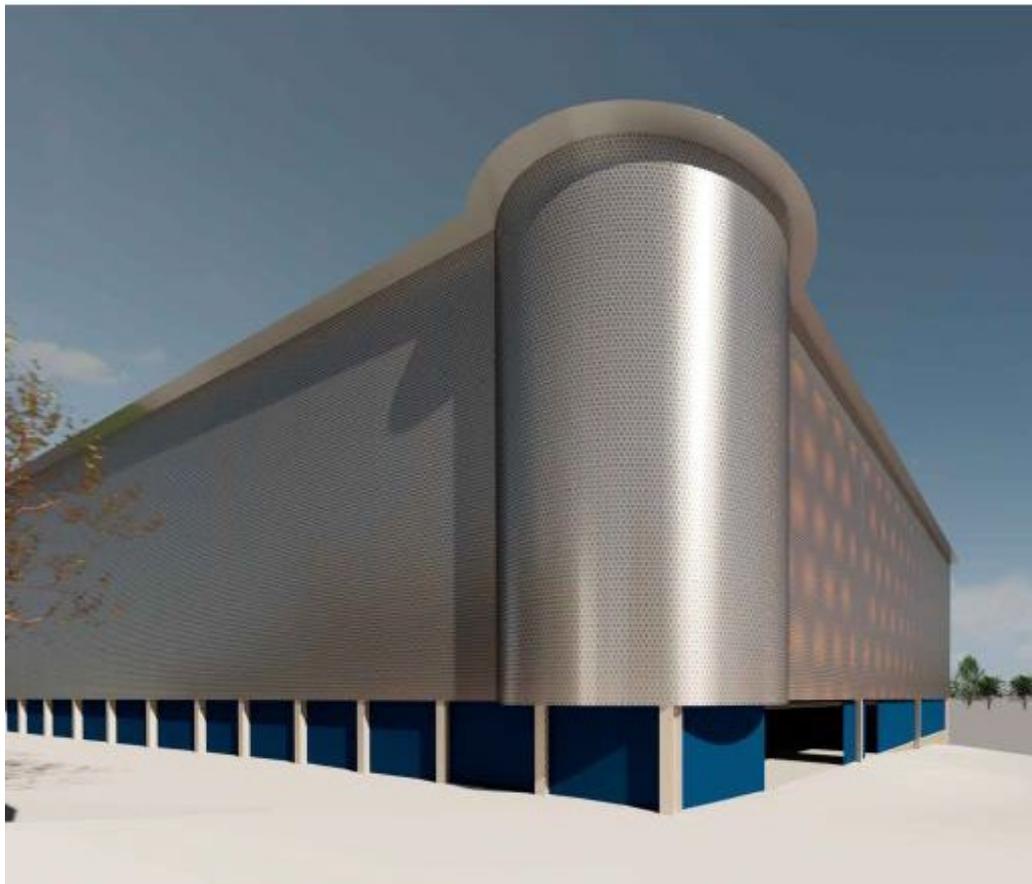


Figure 8: Indicative external appearance

16. A number of documents have been submitted in support of the planning application. These have been summarised below:

Design and Access Statement:

- The proposed car park represents one part of a wider and more comprehensive town centre regeneration programme. This includes a series of residential, mixed use and commercial developments that together will enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre, ensuring it is an attractive place to work, live and visit. This also includes the planned redevelopment of other existing car park sites. As such, it is essential that the town centre maintains an adequate supply of accessible, safe and secure car parking spaces to service the growth, complementing the town's public transport offer.
- The layout utilises the existing use as a surface car park, albeit, on a multi-storey basis. It is informed by the need to create an internal parking layout that is efficient and meets relevant space standards, providing a level of parking that is needed to support the town centre.
- The main entrance would be provided on its south western corner, being visible from the access road off Station Road, enhancing wayfinding and legibility.
- The scale both provides the level of parking needed for the town centre, and also reflects the prevailing scale of development in the surrounding area. Five storey development is currently characteristic of the surrounding area, with the office blocks at Kent House and the Stourside Centre both providing five storeys of accommodation. When viewed in the context of consented and proposed development across the wider town centre, including the Kent Wool Growers scheme to the south, the proposed scale would be appropriate.
- The view from Vicarage Lane would represent a key view from the town centre, as levels fall away to the east, the building will be most visible from within the adjacent Green Corridor. It is proposed that at night, the eastern elevation will not be artificially lit, reducing visual impact on the more sensitive green corridor.

(SD&DM comment: Appearance including any lighting would form part of any subsequent reserved matters application should outline permission be given).

- Appearance is reserved for future consideration and will be developed at the detailed design stage alongside the tender process. This outline application does however seek to identify and secure the principles to be applied to the final finish and appearance of the building, to help guide the tender process and ensure the final finish is of the quality that the Council as operator requires and demands.

(SD&DM comment: Appearance is not being considered at this stage. Detailed design is a reserved matter and as such is not for consideration under this outline application).

- Landscaping is reserved for future consideration and a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme will follow at reserved matters stage. Notwithstanding this, a landscape strategy for the scheme has been identified to deliver a high-quality setting for the building.
- A Tree Survey has established that in order to deliver a 500 space car park at a suitable storey height for the area, it is necessary to remove existing vegetation and boundary planting to the north and east of the site. Wherever possible and practicable, new planting will be provided.
- Vehicular access is to remain from Station Road, although this will be widened to accommodate an extra lane, allowing a two lane exit arrangement to split left and right turning traffic. This approach has been informed by the traffic modelling work outlined within the accompanying Transport Report and will assist in minimising any impacts upon the highway network.
- All proposed parking bays are covered and benefit from lift access. 24 (5%) will be allocated and to a specification for disabled users whilst 120 spaces will be active electric vehicle charging spaces from the day of opening, with the remaining 380 spaces being future proofed as passive bays for conversion as the anticipated uptake of electric vehicles increases.
- Footways are provided from the site towards the town centre and station, linking to existing dedicated signalled crossing points to deliver safe pedestrian links along the key desire lines. Recognising the slight gradient along the access road up towards the town centre, bench seating is also proposed to assist any elderly or less mobile users of the car park.
- The applicant has engaged with Kent Police's Designing out Crime Officer to discuss the proposals. This has directly informed the proposed layout and design. Discussions will continue through the detailed design stages to inform the detailed management proposals for the car park, which is also proposed to achieve Park Mark status.

Planning Statement:

- The application site is ideally located within the town centre and provides a deliverable solution to meet the future need of the town. The site is identified in the recently adopted Local Plan for a new multi-storey car park, which will meet the town centre's needs and

support its vitality and viability, whilst also releasing other sustainable previously developed sites in the town centre for development.

- Whilst appearance is reserved for future consideration, illustrative material is provided to indicate the design approach and material palette envisaged for the site. The proposed scale accords with guidance in the Local Plan and responds to the site's context
- The traffic impact of the proposals have been assessed in accordance with a methodology discussed and agreed with the local Highway Authority. This demonstrates that the junction will continue to operate within capacity and wider impacts will not be severe. A significant number of electric vehicle charging spaces will be provided, with all other spaces afforded passive provision for future uptake, more than compensating for any air quality impacts and ensuring the development will be sustainable.
- The proposals have been subject to a comprehensive suite of technical assessments, confirming suitability in respect of all other matters.
- It is considered that the proposals are consistent with the development plan and thus benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Transport Report:

- The existing Station Road car park is characterised by morning arrivals and evening departures which suggests use as a long stay facility for town centre workers. The existing car park exceeds capacity during the day.
- The long-term Ashford Borough Council Strategy is to permanently close short stay car park located off Vicarage Lane and relocate short stay demand to new facility at Station Road. The existing Vicarage Lane car park is characterised by fewer peak hour movements when compared to the Station Road profile. A greater number of overall movements are found at the Vicarage Lane car park, reflecting its use as a short stay facility.
- In order to determine future demand for parking in Ashford, inbound and outbound surveys were undertaken of Station Road and Vicarage Lane car parks and have been used to forecast demand for car parking under a range of scenarios.

- The analysis suggests that the greatest number of peak hour movements would arise where a higher number of spaces are designated as long stay spaces. As short stay spaces are introduced, peak hour movements would decrease during the morning peak.
- The capacity modelling results suggest that the existing access junction is able to accommodate movements associated with the increased car parking numbers identified and tested in this report. Whilst some degree of saturation values are above 90%, they remain within capacity.
- The junction will operate within capacity with the more reasoned assessment that does not consider the blanket application of background traffic growth and is more appropriate for a town centre location.
- The proposed changes to the Station Road car park exit arm at the junction will have a noticeable beneficial impact on capacity, especially during the evening peak period. The increase in vehicles exiting the car park during this period will be able to make use of two exit lanes, reducing the amount of green time at the junction that must be provided for car park users. This green time can be allocated to Station Road through movement, improving overall capacity and journey times along Station Road.
- Across the network the modelling indicates there to be some differences across the tested scenarios, assuming Vicarage Lane to be closed or to remain open. Some outputs such as journey time show marked changes as movements are reduced as a consequence of their being fewer long stay commuting spaces.
- Commuter spaces have the greatest peak period impact as clearly the movements associated with this are relating to people arriving and leaving work during the busiest times of the day. Some additional delay to users of the network is forecast compared to the 2024 reference case. However changes in journey times that are forecast in a town centre location during the busiest periods of the day are not considered to be excessive and should be weighed against the improvements in journeys times in other directions. The need to consider the changes in the round is especially important in the context of the wider economic benefits proposed through delivery of the multi storey car park as a key piece of infrastructure to deliver town centre improvements.

Ecology report:

- Species poor hedgerows at the north and east boundaries outside the proposed development curtilage.

- There are two Local Nature Reserves (LNR). Ashford green Corridor sites 630m south and 375m northeast. The nearest Green Corridor LNR is along the Great Stour 108m east of Station Road car park.
- There are no wildlife significant trees within the development area. There are a number of individual birch trees within the parking area but none are wildlife significant.
- Where possible trees and boundary hedging should be retained.
- There are no buildings or trees present on site suitable to support roosting bats.
- Small mammals such as foxes, rats and mice may use the site for foraging as suitable opportunities/habitat exists in adjacent hedgerows, green space and the urban environment.
- No active nests found (outside breeding season) Breeding bird habitat is limited to the hedgerow to the north and east boundaries and outside the curtilage of the proposed development.
- Woodpigeon, collared dove, nuthatch, blackbird and chaffinch recorded in adjacent habitats. Woodpigeon was also recorded in the birch trees on site. There are likely to be a greater range of bird species in the general area.
- No adders or grass snake observed and unlikely to be a suitable habitat.
- No slow worms observed and considered unlikely due to lack of suitable habitat on site.
- No common lizard's observed, considered unlikely due to the limited suitable habitat available on site. No rarer reptiles found.
- Great Crested newts considered unlikely as no suitable habitat (ponds) on site. Although records of great crested newts occur within 1km of the site, the surrounding infrastructure such as buildings, roads and the railway line prove to be an effective barrier to the dispersal and movement of the species.
- As the site is adjacent to the Ashford Green Corridor Local Nature Reserve there is the potential for conflict between the Local Plan and the proposed development. However the site is an existing brownfield site and providing linkages to the green corridor can be maintained via existing hedgerows and or native planting any potential conflict can be resolved.
- The report makes recommendations relating to appropriate mitigation in section 4.

Drainage Report:

- The proposed development will incorporate a sustainable drainage system, which will discharge surface water at below greenfield rates to the existing private surface water sewer located in the southeast corner of the site. Storage will be provided for all storm return periods up to and including the 1:100 year rainfall event with an additional 40% allowance to account for the predicted future effects of climate change.
- The proposed attenuation systems reduce the peak and total volumetric site runoff for all major storm events.
- There is no foul water provision available on the site and no requirement for a foul sewer connection is proposed.

Air Quality Assessment:

- A qualitative assessment of the potential dust impacts during the construction of the development has been undertaken. Through good practice and implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, it is expected that the release of dust would be effectively controlled and mitigated, with resulting impacts considered to be 'not significant'. All dust impacts are considered to be temporary and short-term in nature.
- Due to the low additional number of HDV trips anticipated during the construction phase of the development, there is predicted to be a neutral impact / insignificant effect on air quality from road vehicle emissions. Furthermore, emissions from plant / NRMM on-site is predicted to result in a 'not significant' impact on air quality.
- Additional development trips arising during the operational phase of the scheme are not predicted to cause any exceedances of the NO₂ or PM₁₀ annual AQAL, with a maximum absolute predicted change in annual mean NO₂ and PM₁₀ concentrations of +0.46µg/m³ and +0.06µg/m³ respectively. There is no predicted risk of exceedance of the 1-hour mean NO₂ or 24-hour mean PM₁₀ AQALs as a result of the development proposals. As such, the overall effect is considered to be 'not significant'.
- It is not considered that air quality represents a material constraint to the development proposals, which conform to the principles of National Planning Policy Framework or Planning Practice Guidance, and the policies of the Ashford Local Plan.

Arboricultural Impact Assessment:

- The proposed development will require the removal of 21 trees and one tree group specifically, the entire contiguous vegetation belt along the eastern boundary will be removed, to facilitate the proposed development;
- The line of copparded lime trees along the northern boundary are proposed for recopparding, to facilitate the proposed development;
- The long-term impact to the lime trees along the northern boundary of the proposed development is likely to be insignificant, subject to the appropriate design of the northern elevation of the proposed development; and
- The means of soft landscaping to ease the proposed development into its landscape context must strongly consider off-site mitigation planting with a particular focus to the eastern boundary with the Ashford Green Corridor.

Planning History

17. There is no recent relevant planning history with the existing surface car park having been in use for a number of years.

Consultations

Ward Members: Neither of the Ward Members, Councillor Suddards and Councillor Farrell have commented on this application and are not members of the planning committee.

62 Neighbours have been consulted, **0** letters of representation have been received.

Kent County Council Highways and Transportation: No objections. Comments summarised below:

The proposals have been the subject to extensive pre-application discussions. This included the scope of the Transport Report and agreeing the traffic impact assessment on the Station Road / Vicarage Lane traffic signal junction and also the Station Road corridor.

The existing car park operates as a long-stay car park due to the pricing structure which makes it attractive for stays in excess of 4 hours. A proportion of the 500 spaces, at least equivalent to the 120 spaces are likely to be classed as long stay however the proportion of long stay spaces has not yet been fixed. The transport report has assessed 3 different scenarios, being 75% long stay (375 spaces), 50% long stay (250 spaces) and 25% long stay (125 spaces).

If the long term strategy of ABC is to close the existing Vicarage Lane car park for re-development, this car park is likely to provide replacement car parking for Vicarage Lane. However, a scenario of Vicarage Lane car park also remaining open to the public for a period of time after re-development completion has also been considered for robustness. Forecast peak hour movements have been predicted based on the existing movements out of both Station Road and Vicarage Lane car parks and these are set out in Table 5.3 of the report.

The scenario with the largest proportion of long stay car parking (75%) generates the largest amount of vehicle movements in the peaks, (325 movements in the AM peak and 391 movements in the PM peak) as this typically associated with both commuter car parking and parking associated with employees in the town centre. This assumes that the Vicarage Lane car park is closed.

The distribution of trips has been based on the existing turning movements across the local highway network. This assessment was completed separately for the Station Road and Vicarage Lane car parks given the nature and location of these facilities and the turning movements that are apparent from each.

A junction capacity assessment of Station Road / Vicarage Lane junction has been undertaken for a 2024 future year scenario (year of planning application plus 5 years). Two committed development sites have also been included in the analysis, Elwick Road Phase 2 for up to 200 flats and the Kent Woolgrowers site served from Tannery Lane for 243 units. The junction modelling results indicate that the junction will continue to operate within capacity in a 2024 future year scenario without the development with a maximum Degree of Saturation (DoS) on Vicarage Lane of 86.9% in the PM Peak together with a queue of 10 vehicles.

The impact of the development is substantial without any mitigation with the junction operating in excess of 100% in the PM Peak on the Station Road North arm with a queue of 40 vehicles in a scenario with 75% of the spaces being long-stay. This would be unacceptable to KCC Highways and Transportation and would result in severe capacity issues. In order to address these capacity issues the applicant is proposing a two-lane exit from the private access road onto Station Road. The provision of two lanes will mean that drivers will be able to wait for a green signal across two traffic lanes rather than one. This also means that the amount of green time that is needed to discharge car park traffic in each cycle can be reduced when compared to the existing layout. The additional green time has been allocated to Station Road, improving the overall performance and allowing Station Road traffic to move more freely.

This will bring the junction back within a 100% theoretical capacity (at 98.7% as set out in Table 7.6) even assuming general growth in the highway network over the above 5 year period and the above committed development, which is very much a worst case scenario. The general growth in the highway network is as a subsequent result of permitted developments. There is therefore an element of double counting in the modelling results and the junction is unlikely to operate at a DoS of 98.7%.

An assessment of capacity of the junction under scenarios where car park attraction and committed development are considered but the blanket application of background growth is omitted has been undertaken. This demonstrates that the junction will operate with a maximum DoS of 86.1% on the Station Road North arm in the AM peak. This is well within an industry accepted 90% practical capacity figure. Queuing on Station Road is not forecast to extend significantly to interfere with any formal pedestrian crossing locations. As part of the proposals to improve the capacity of the junction in the AM peak the applicant is proposing a slight increase in the cycle times in the AM Peak to provide additional green time to Station Road. Should planning permission for the proposals be granted then this will need to be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition.

The applicant has also undertaken a traffic model of the Station Road corridor from the North Street / Somerset Road junction in the north through to the junction with Elwick Road in the south. It should be noted that this is a town centre A-class road and currently congestion is currently evident in the PM peak. Journey times are the most important part of the traffic model in that this is what the general public can relate to. During the morning peak period journey times are expected to reduce in a northbound direction quite significantly by approximately 60 seconds however in a southbound direction they are expected to increase by around 30 seconds. This is also the same for the evening peak period with journey times expected to reduce in a northbound direction by about 40 seconds however in a southbound direction they are expected to increase by a maximum of around 75 seconds.

Although in a southbound direction general journey times are expected to worsen it is KCC Highways and Transportation's opinion that this is not a severe impact on balance given the improved journey times in a northerly direction.

The provision of a multi-storey car park is also an adopted policy in the Ashford Local Plan and is likely to have wider economic benefits for the town centre in encouraging regeneration and creating new jobs.

Requests conditions and informatives should outline permission be given.

Kent County Council Flood and Water Management: No objections stating the following:

As part of the future reserved matters stage or detailed design, it should be demonstrated that the propriety treatment system proposed for the development would be sufficient to manage pollution risks in line with the required total treatment levels as detailed within table 26.2, Chapter 26 of the CIRIA SuDs manual.

A condition is requested requiring the submission of a detailed sustainable surface water drainage strategy.

Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions to ensure that the development would not cause or be put at unacceptable risk from, or be adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution.

Kent County Council Heritage (Archaeology): No objections subject to a condition relating to archaeological field evaluation works. Comments are summarised below:

The site of the application lies to the east of the historic core of Ashford town, a medieval market town. The site has not been heavily developed although there may have been some historic landscaping. There is some potential for prehistoric and later remains.

Environmental Health Manager: No objections having considered the air quality report and the phase 1 desk study. Requests an informative in relation to construction code of practice and contamination and a condition to ensure that any contamination is appropriately dealt with.

Kent Police: No comments.

Kent Fire and Rescue: No objections stating the following:

It appears that access to the site for the Fire and Rescue Service, as required by Section 53 of the above legislation, is adequate. Consideration has also been given to on site access as required by Building Regulations Approved Document B Section 5.

Ashford Access Group: No objections stating that they will bring forward any concerns in relation to pedestrian access, guard rail and gradients at the time of the detailed RM application.

Planning Policy

18. The Development Plan comprises the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted February 2019), the Chilmington Green AAP (2013), the Wye Neighbourhood Plan (2016), the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan (2017) and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2016).
19. For clarification, the Local Plan 2030 supersedes the saved policies in the Ashford Local Plan (2000), Ashford Core Strategy (2008), Ashford Town Centre Action Area Plan (2010), the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD (2010) and the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD (2012).
20. The relevant policies from the Local Plan relating to this application are as follows:-

SP1 – Strategic Objectives

SP3 – Strategic Approach to Economic Development

SP5 – Ashford Town Centre

SP6 – Promoting High Quality Design

S1 – Commercial Quarter

TRA2 – Strategic Public Parking

TRA5 – Planning for Pedestrians

TRA8 – Travel Plans, Assessments and Statements

ENV2 – The Ashford Green Corridor

ENV9 – Sustainable Drainage

ENV10 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

ENV12 – Air Quality

21. The following are also material considerations to the determination of this application.

Government Advice

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

22. Members should note that the determination must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A significant material consideration is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
23. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
24. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

25. The three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development are detailed as:
- a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
26. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. It states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
27. Paragraph 85 states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation
28. Paragraph 106 states that in town centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

Assessment

29. The main issues for consideration are:
- Principle of the development
 - Visual impact and impact upon the Green Corridor

- Highway safety
- Residential amenity
- Air Quality
- Surface Water Drainage, SuDS, Biodiversity, Archaeology

Principle of the development

30. The NPPF places great weight upon the need to support the economy and business growth.
31. The availability of publically available car parking has a major influence on the means of transport chosen and is also recognised as being crucial to ensuring new development is successful. The Commercial Quarter (policy S1) in particular envisages a significant amount of new office space (some of which has already been built at Dover Place) which requires adequate parking nearby to ensure commercial terms can be achieved and space can be successfully let.
32. Policy S1 within which the application site falls, states that it is envisaged that the northern part of the site would provide a multi storey car park. The preamble to the policy also states at paragraph 3.9 that the existing car park is considered to be a suitable location for a future Multi Storey Car Park, utilising its accessibility to the Town Centre and existing access onto Station Road.
33. The 2015 parking study commissioned by the Council to support the Local Plan sets out the need for new town centre parking to partly replace existing car parks and to cater for additional demand from new development (planned and consented).
34. The study highlighted that the town centre currently has enough vacant car parking spaces to cater for current and future demand. However, not all of these spaces are truly available in practice as many are located on the periphery of the town centre in relatively inaccessible locations and therefore it is questionable how attractive these spaces are for short stay users.
35. In addition, a number of vacant spaces are also located within privately owned and run car parks and as such the Council has little control over their operations. Further, some of the car parks are only intended to be available for a temporary period of time and it is envisaged that the Edinburgh Road

and Vicarage Lane Car Parks have the potential to be suitable locations for redevelopment in the longer term

36. The Council therefore recognises that a flexible approach to parking is needed, one which can best respond to development as it comes forward in a way that caters for both the needs of long stay and short stay users. This strategy is very much part of the overall spatial aspiration for Ashford Town Centre, providing a net increase in parking provision, in the right places and with the avoidance of further land-take, while providing opportunities for the redevelopment other land.

Policy TRS2 of the Local Plan endorses the Councils approach to car parking within the town centre stating that:

‘The Council will prioritise an aspiration for the delivery of two new multi-storey public car parks in Ashford Town Centre, one of which will have an indicative capacity of 300 spaces, and the other with an indicative capacity of 400 – 600 spaces’.

37. In light of the above, it is considered that the redevelopment of this site for use as a multi storey car park is entirely appropriate and consistent in policy terms as set out in S1 and TRA2 of the adopted Local Plan.

Visual impact and impact on the setting of the Green Corridor

38. Appearance is reserved for future consideration and will be developed at the detailed design stage. Members will note that this application does however seek to identify and secure the principles to be applied to the final finish and appearance of the building as can be seen in figure 8 of this report. The proposed modern design approach is supported in principle, as is the use of high quality materials and the treatment of the south western corner as a design feature. Further consideration of the design will however need to be made at the reserved matters.
39. In terms of scale, policy S1 of the Local Plan includes guidance on building heights within the Commercial Quarter and states that development in the Quarter should generally be an average of 5-6 storeys in height, with potentially taller buildings at the heart of the Quarter and slightly smaller buildings on the riverside frontage. At five storeys in height, the proposals would comply with Policy S1 and would be in keeping with the scale of existing nearby buildings. As such the development would represent a suitable scale.
40. The site is located adjacent to the Ashford Green Corridor. All development proposals on land within or adjoining the Green Corridor must demonstrate that

the proposal would not harm the overall environment, biodiversity value, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning.

41. Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan states that development proposals on land adjoining the Green Corridor shall provide suitable access and links to the existing movement networks of the adjoining Green Corridor wherever possible. In addition development must not cause significant harm to any of the key features and functions, and should make a positive contribution to the Green Corridor in respect of its environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning and its setting.
42. The proposed development would likely result in the majority of the site being developed resulting in the complete loss of trees and other vegetation along the eastern boundary where it adjoins the Green Corridor. These trees are not in themselves of great amenity value they do provide a level of screening between the site and the school sports pitches. Whilst the loss is considered disappointing, the overall impact upon the visual setting of the green corridor from public vantage is less significant due to the additional band of trees adjacent to the river bank located within the grounds of the school. Furthermore in order to ensure that this development would make a positive contribution to the green corridor it is proposed that some landscape enhancements are to be provided within North Park to the east of the site which it is proposed would be secured by means of a Grampian condition. This would go some way to help mitigate the harm that the development would cause to the setting of the Green Corridor.

Highway safety

43. A Transport assessment has been submitted in order to assess how and to what extent the proposed development would impact upon the surrounding highway network.
44. The report shows that the existing Station Road car park is utilised largely as a long stay car park characterised by morning arrivals and evening departures. The car park exceeds capacity during the day.
45. The Councils long term strategy is for the permanent closure of the existing short-stay car park located at Vicarage Lane. The demand would be relocated to the new Station Road car park. This approach is set out within the local plan.
46. The proposals would require changes to the Station Road exit arm at the junction to provide an additional lane and this will have a beneficial impact on capacity, especially during evening peak periods. This change will increase the number of vehicles exiting the site, thus reducing the amount of green time given over to the car park to the benefit of the wider network.

47. A number of scenarios have been assessed reflecting the different scenarios of Vicarage Lane car park being open or closed and considering different profiles of long versus short stay usage. The assessment also includes committed town centre development in addition to background traffic growth. It is also relevant to consider that as a town centre car park, it will be a facility that provides infrastructure to serve existing town centre development and is thus not a traditional trip generator in the same way that other development is, albeit it will affect flow and distribution of movements.
48. The results of the assessments carried out show that in all scenarios, the junction will operate within capacity in peak periods with no significant increase to queueing on Station Road itself. Journey times in some directions are forecast to improve, and to marginally increase in others.
49. Kent Highways and Transportation have been consulted and have raised no objections the development, being satisfied that the changes in journey times would not be excessive particularly when considered against the improvements to waiting times in other directions.
50. The preamble to Policy S1 states that the possibility of providing an additional access onto Tannery Lane should be considered as part of any MSCP proposal at the application site, however, as the Transport Report and associated assessment work illustrates, the scheme will result in the existing Station Road junction operating within capacity.
51. In light of the above I am satisfied that the highway impacts are satisfactory.

Residential amenity

Given the proximity of the development to existing residential properties, the closest of which would be approximately 80 metres away in Pluto House, the development would not be harmful to the amenity of residents through overbearing development and would not result in a loss of privacy through overlooking. The proposed development would not harm the residential amenity of the occupiers of the Pluto House flats.

Air Quality and renewable/low carbon energy

52. The proposed development has been considered by the Council's Environmental Health Manager who has raised no objections to the findings of the submitted Air Quality Report. In addition it is noted that the development proposes to provide 120 active electric vehicle charging points to be available from the day of opening. The remaining parking bays would be passive bays fitted out with the required infrastructure to allow for the future provision of vehicle charging ports.

53. The NPPF requires LPA's to have a proactive strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change within their Local Plans. This should include policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting the delivery of highly efficient buildings in terms of energy use. Policy ENV10 of the Local Plan supports proposals to generate energy from renewable and low carbon sources. Furthermore the Council has pledged a commitment to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2030 with a further target to have 80% of emissions eliminated by 2025.
54. In addition, the proposed use of the roof for generating energy through photovoltaic panels is welcomed and supported and would make good use of the roof space.
55. In light of the above it is considered that the development would comply with the requirements of ENV1 and ENV12 and is considered to be acceptable in this respect.

Surface Water Drainage, SuDS, Biodiversity, Archaeology

Drainage/SuDS:

56. The development is not located within the Flood zones 2 or 3. The geology of the area is predominantly clay and is therefore unlikely to provide suitable infiltration to accommodate an infiltration drainage system.
57. Preliminary calculations provided within the submitted drainage report indicate that surface water runoff generated by the proposed development can be attenuated on site for all rainfall events up to the 1:100 year event including an additional 40% allowance to account for the predicted future effects of climate change. As a result, the policy and best practice criteria with respect to site runoff rates can be achieved.
58. Given the location of the site close to the River Stour it is important to consider the pollution risks. Water quality improvement is proposed to be provided to mitigate against any risk to any receiving waterbody.
59. KCC Flood and Water Management have raised no objections to this approach subject to a condition to ensure the reserved matters should demonstrate that the proprietary treatment system proposed for the development would be sufficient to manage pollution risks. This is further endorsed by the Environment Agency.
60. In light of the above I am satisfied that adequate drainage and mitigation can be provided to serve the development.

Biodiversity & Archaeology:

61. Following consultation with Kent County Council's Archaeological Officer it is agreed that whilst because the site has not been heavily developed in the past there may be the potential for prehistoric or later remains to be present. Notwithstanding this, a condition requiring archaeological field evaluation works to take place prior to the commencement of any development, would ensure that any features of archaeological interest could be properly examined and recorded.
62. The submitted ecology report has indicated that the site does not provide any significant ecological or biodiversity benefits. The proposals

Human Rights Issues

63. I have also taken into account the human rights issues relevant to this application. In my view, the "Assessment" section above and the Recommendation below represent an appropriate balance between the interests and rights of the applicant (to enjoy their land subject only to reasonable and proportionate controls by a public authority) and the interests and rights of those potentially affected by the proposal (to respect for private life and the home and peaceful enjoyment of their properties).

Working with the applicant

64. In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and creative manner as explained in the note to the applicant included in the recommendation below.

Conclusion

1. The application seeks to make efficient use of an existing surface car park in accordance with policy SP5 which encourages the effective use of previously developed land. Planning policy identifies this site for use as a multi storey car park S1).
2. The proposed new car park would support existing demand and provide for future demand taking account of consented and planned developments.
3. The development would not be harmful to residential amenity.
4. The proposed scale accords with Policy S1 of the Local Plan.
5. There would be a visual impact upon the setting of the Green Corridor due to the proposed scale of the development together with the loss of existing

vegetation. Subject to a scheme of Green Corridor enhancements secured by condition, it is considered that these impacts can be appropriately overcome.

6. The development is not located within a flood zone and it is considered that surface water drainage can be adequately dealt with.
7. Subject to conditions it is considered that ecological and archaeological matters can be appropriately mitigated.
8. The proposed development would not result in harm to highway safety. It has also been demonstrated that the junction would operate within capacity.
9. The development would provide PV panels to the roof providing renewable /low carbon energy consistent with policy ENV10. EV charging ports are also proposed encouraging the use of electric vehicles and providing air quality benefits (policy ENV12).
10. The proposed development would comply with the Development Plan as a whole.

Recommendation

Permit

Subject to the following Conditions and Notes:

(with delegated authority to the Strategic Development and Delivery Manager or Development Management Manager to make or approve changes to the planning conditions (for the avoidance of doubt including additions, amendments and deletions) as she/he sees fit).

Approval of reserved matters and time condition

1. Approval of the details of the layout, landscaping and appearance (hereafter called "the Reserved Matters") shall be obtained from the Local Planning Authority in writing before development commences and the development shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Application for approval of the Reserved Matters relating to layout, appearance and landscaping shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

The development hereby permitted shall be begun no later than the expiration of 2 years from the date of approval of the last of the Reserved Matters to be approved.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Contamination

No development shall commence until a strategy to deal with the potential risks associated with any contamination of the site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. This strategy will include the following components:

1. A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:
 - a) all previous uses;
 - b) potential contaminants associated with those uses;
 - c) a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors; and
 - d) potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.
2. A site investigation scheme, based on (1 above) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.
3. The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (2 above) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
4. A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (3 above) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the prior written consent of the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors.

Code of Construction Practice

Prior to the commencement of the development a Code of Construction Practice/Construction Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The construction of the development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved Code of Construction Practice/Construction Management Plan and BS5228 Noise Vibration and Control on

Construction and Open Sites and the Control of dust from construction sites (BRE DTi Feb 2003).

The code shall include,

- An indicative programme for carrying out the works
- Measures to minimise the production of dust on the site(s)
- Measures to minimise the noise (including vibration) generated by the construction process to include the careful selection of plant and machinery and use of noise mitigation barrier(s)
- Design and provision of site hoardings
- Management of traffic visiting the site(s) including routing of construction and delivery vehicles, temporary parking or holding areas
- Timings of deliveries
- Provision of off road parking for all site operatives
- Wheel washing measures to prevent the transfer of mud and extraneous material onto the public highway
- Measures to manage the production of waste and to maximise the re-use of materials
- Measures to minimise the potential for pollution of groundwater and surface water
- The location and design of site office(s) and storage compounds
- The location of temporary vehicle access points to the site(s) during the construction works
- The arrangements for public consultation and liaison during the construction works
- Temporary Traffic Management/signage

Reason: To protect the amenity of local residents and in the interests of highway safety.

Surface Water Drainage

Development shall not begin until a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site has been submitted to (and approved in writing by) the local planning authority. The detailed drainage scheme shall be based upon the principles contained within the Drainage Statement by The Civil Engineering Practice (June 2019, Version 1.1) and shall demonstrate that the surface water generated by this development (for all rainfall durations and intensities up to and including the climate change adjusted critical 100 year storm) can be accommodated and disposed of without increase to flood risk on or off-site.

The drainage scheme shall also demonstrate (with reference to published guidance):

- that silt and pollutants resulting from the site use can be adequately managed to ensure there is no pollution risk to receiving waters.

- appropriate operational, maintenance and access requirements for each drainage feature or SuDS component are adequately considered, including any proposed arrangements for future adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker.

The drainage scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development is served by satisfactory arrangements for the disposal of surface water and to ensure that the development does not exacerbate the risk of on/off site flooding. These details and accompanying calculations are required prior to the commencement of the development as they form an intrinsic part of the proposal, the approval of which cannot be disaggregated from the carrying out of the rest of the development.

The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until a Verification Report, pertaining to the surface water drainage system and prepared by a suitably competent person, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The Report shall demonstrate the suitable modelled operation of the drainage system where the system constructed is different to that approved. The Report shall contain information and evidence (including photographs) of details and locations of inlets, outlets and control structures; landscape plans; full as built drawings; information pertinent to the installation of those items identified on the critical drainage assets drawing; and, the submission of an operation and maintenance manual for the sustainable drainage scheme as constructed.

Reason: To ensure that flood risks from development to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those risks to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development as constructed is compliant with and subsequently maintained pursuant to the requirements of paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Archaeology

Prior to the commencement of development the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure and implement:

- i) archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and
- ii) further archaeological investigation, recording and reporting, determined by the results of the evaluation, in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

Highways

Prior to the use first use of the multi storey car park, 20 secure, covered cycle parking spaces shall be provided in accordance with details previously submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These cycle parking spaces shall thereafter be retained for use and access shall not be precluded.

Reason: In the interests of encouraging sustainable transport.

The two lane vehicular exit onto Station Road hereby approved and detailed on drawing number MSCP22 Rev E shall be provided in accordance with the approved plan prior to the first use of the multi storey car park by the public.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety

The proposed alterations to the signal timings of the junction of Station Road and Vicarage Lane (as set out in Appendix E of the Transport Report) shall be provided prior to the first use of the multi storey car park by the public in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Kent Highways and Transportation.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

Prior to the first use of the multi storey car park by the public, plans and details (together with a car parking design future proofing strategy facilitating easy future installation of additional charging points responding to customer demands) for the provision of electric vehicle charging points shall be provided to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing.

Thereafter the charging points shall be implemented and maintained in perpetuity in accordance with the approved details and retained available in a working order to assist customers charging an electric or hybrid vehicle.

Reason: In order to take into account the cumulative impacts of major development on air quality and to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes by customers by incorporating facilities for the charging of plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles at the point of trip destination.

Green Corridor Enhancements

The submission for reserved matters shall include full details of the landscape enhancements proposed within the Green Corridor on land identified within the approved mitigation perimeter drawing received 13/11/2019. These details will

include long term objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules.

The enhancements should seek to maximise biodiversity and provide wildlife corridors, whilst maintaining views of the river. It should include riverside vegetation and tree planting to the west and east of Civic Park and to the west and east of South Park.

The works shall thereafter be carried out and maintained as approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure the Green Corridor enhancements are appropriately implemented and properly maintained in the interest of the amenity and biodiversity of the Green Corridor.

Note to Applicant

1. Working with the Applicant

In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by;

- offering a pre-application advice service,
- as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application
- where possible suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome,
- informing applicants/agents of any likely recommendation of refusal prior to a decision and,
- by adhering to the requirements of the Development Management Customer Charter.

In this instance

- the applicant/agent was updated of any issues after the initial site visit,
- was provided with pre-application advice,
- The applicant was provided the opportunity to submit amendments and additional information to address issues.
- The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the application.

2. Kent Highways

Planning permission does not convey any approval for construction of the required vehicular crossing, or any other works within the highway for which a statutory licence must be obtained.

Applicants should contact Kent County Council - Highways and Transportation (web: www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport.aspx or telephone: 03000 418181) in order to obtain the necessary Application Pack.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure, before the development hereby approved is commenced, that all necessary highway approvals and consents where required are obtained and that the limits of highway boundary are clearly established in order to avoid any enforcement action being taken by the Highway Authority.

Across the county there are pieces of land next to private homes and gardens that do not look like roads or pavements but are actually part of the road. This is called 'highway land'. Some of this land is owned by The Kent County Council (KCC) whilst some are owned by third party owners. Irrespective of the ownership, this land may have 'highway rights' over the topsoil. Information about how to clarify the highway boundary can be found at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/highway-land/highway-boundary-enquiries>

The applicant must also ensure that the details shown on the approved plans agree in every aspect with those approved under such legislation and common law. It is therefore important for the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress this aspect of the works prior to commencement on site.

Environmental Health

The applicant should note the code of practice hours in relation to potentially noisy construction/demolition activities which are 0800-1800 Monday to Friday, and 0800-1300 hours Saturday. Noisy works should not occur, outside of these times, on Sundays or Bank/Public Holidays.

The applicant should note that it is illegal to burn any controlled wastes, which includes all waste except green waste/vegetation cut down on the site where it can be burnt without causing a nuisance to neighbouring properties.

The applicant should take such measures as reasonably practical to minimise dust emissions from construction and demolition activities and for that purpose would refer them to the IAQM guidance on controlling dust on construction sites.

Background Papers

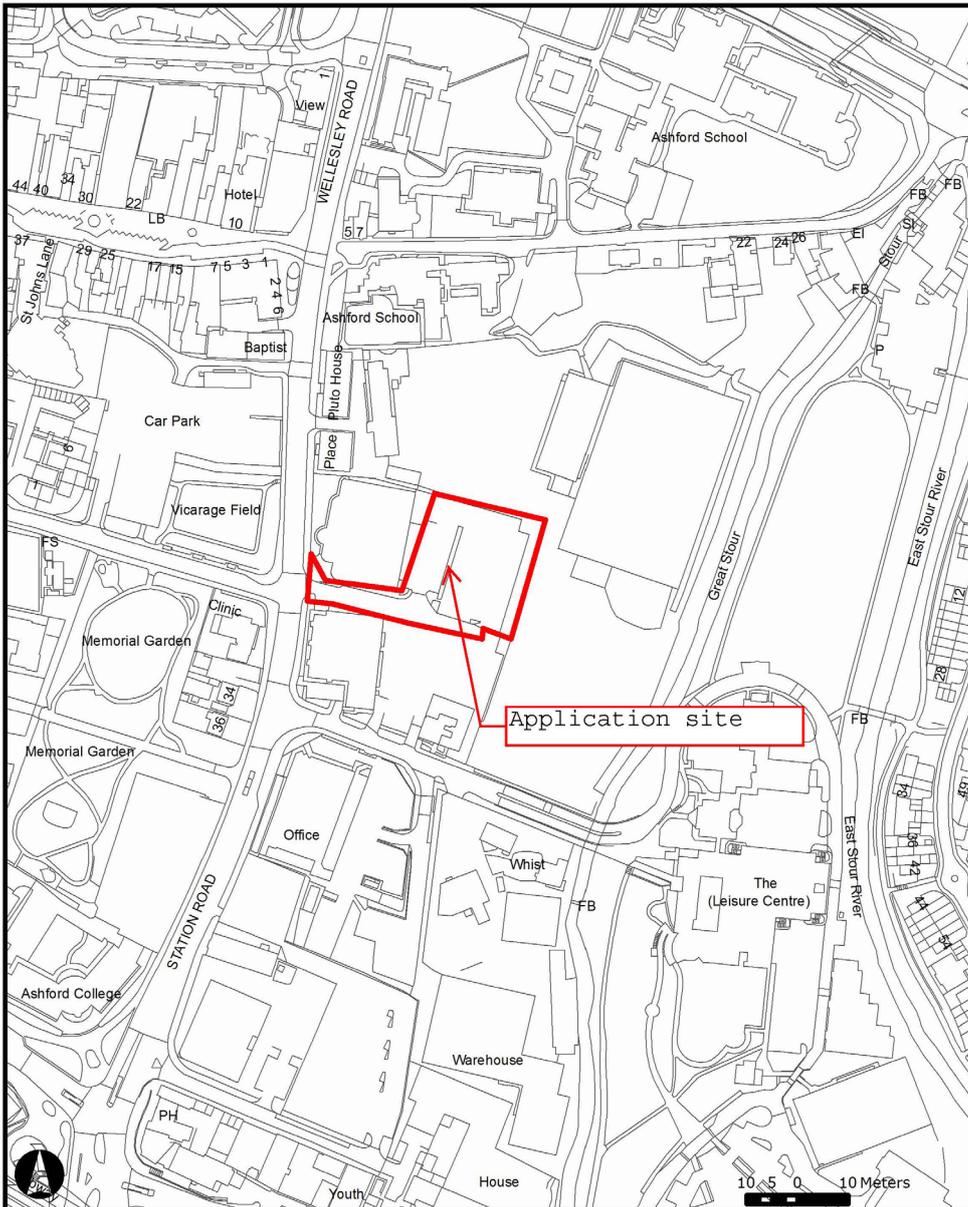
All papers referred to in this report are currently published on the Ashford Borough Council web site (www.ashford.gov.uk). Those papers relating specifically to this application may be found on the [View applications on line](#) pages under planning application reference 19/01112/AS)

Contact Officer: Alex Stafford
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Annex 1



Ashford Borough Council



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