

**MC/25/2152**

**Date Received:** 3 November 2025  
**Location:** Maidstone Road Sports Ground, Bournville Avenue, Chatham  
**Proposal:** Construction of a floodlit football foundation playzone with linked path.  
**Applicant** Medway Council  
Mr John Hatchett  
**Agent** MUGA UK Ltd  
Mr Neil McHugh  
Mill Farm  
Hathern Road  
Shepshed  
LE12 9RP  
**Ward:** Chatham Central & Brompton  
**Case Officer:** Mary Smith  
**Contact Number:** 01634 331700

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**Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 14 January 2026.**

**Recommendation - Approval with Conditions**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Received 19 November 2025  
MCA-MUK3468-02 Rev E Site Plan with Landscaping (showing footpath)

Received 15 December 2025  
MCA-MUK3468-01 Rev D Proposed Layout  
MCA-MUK3468-04 Rev A Elevations S&E  
MCA-MUK3468-06 Rev A Elevations N&W

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

- 3 Prior to the bringing into use of the playzone hereby approved and with the submission of the biodiversity gain plan a Landscape and Ecological

Management Plan (LEMP) must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP must include:

- A landscaping plan (including location, species, size at time of planting and numbers/densities).
- The aims and objectives of the plan.
- The methodology of how the habitats will be established on site.
- A rolling 5-year management plan.
- Timings of works (including planting).
- Details of who will carry out the works.

The LEMP must be approved before the PlayZone is first used and it shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory provision for landscaping and ecology in accordance with Policies BNE1, BNE6 and BNE 38 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

4 In this Condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars; and paragraphs a) and b) below shall have effect until the expiration of 5 years from the date of the first use of the approved PlayZone.

- a) No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be pruned other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars. Any pruning approved shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 (Tree Work).
- b) If any retained tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time as may be specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- c) The erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and particulars before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality, in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE43 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

5 All works on site (including preparation works) shall be undertaken in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement (McArdle Sport Tec Ltd dated 11 December 2025).

Reason: To protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality, in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE43 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 6 The implementation/construction works shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (McArdle Sport Tec Ltd dated 24 June 2025).

Reason: To minimise the impact of the construction period on amenity and the local highway network, in accordance with Policies BNE2 and T1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 7 Other than the four lighting columns detailed in the application hereby approved, no lighting shall be installed on the site and the lighting hereby approved shall only be turned on when the PlayZone is in use, which shall only be between the hours of 08.00 until 21.00 hours on any day.

Reason: In order to limit the impact of lighting and PlayZone use on protected species, habitat and amenity in accordance with Policies BNE2, BNE5 and BNE39 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

**For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.**

### **Proposal**

It is proposed to provide a PlayZone on part of an area currently used as an informal grass football pitch. This area is fenced off from the wider playing field to the south, with the Chatham Town Football Club stadium to the west and an existing hard play court to the east. The Maidstone Road Sports Ground also includes larger grassed playing areas, play and exercise facilities and a bowls club.

A PlayZone is a surfaced sports pitch suitable for all-year round use. It would be 30m by 20m with additional goal recess areas at either end. The pitch would be fenced with 3m high green mesh fencing, with 4m high white fencing sections by the goals to either end, and 8m high floodlights are proposed at the four corners. The PlayZone would be surfaced with a porous synthetic turf and would have markings for football, netball and cricket. To the southern side, where the entrance would be, would be a 2m wide surfaced spectator area with benches, bins and an equipment cage. It is also proposed to link this by a 2m wide path to an existing gate into the northeast corner of the Chatham Town Football Club stadium.

The intended opening hours of the PlayZone are 8am to 9pm every day. There would be controlled access via an online booking system and a SmartAccess gate system (a code is provided when booking). The proposed floodlights would allow use in the evenings, especially in winter when daylength is short.

The submissions say that the PlayZone Programme has been developed to tackle inequalities in physical activity and access to high quality facilities in targeted areas, by The Football Foundation providing funding towards community led spaces. The

purpose of the PlayZone Scheme is to invest in areas with the greatest need, with the aim of encouraging specific priority groups to be more active. It is stated that the specific priority groups that The Football Foundation wished to prioritise as part of this scheme are lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, disabled people and people with long term health conditions, and ethnically diverse communities.

## **Relevant Planning History**

MC/25/2153 Advertisement consent for installation of non-illuminated vinyl banners.  
Undetermined

MC/25/1120 Prior approval under Part 16 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for the existing 20m monopole supporting 6no antennas at 18.90m (C/L) to be removed and replaced with a new 20m monopole and headframe which will support 9no antennas at 18.52m (C/L) along with ancillary equipment thereto including GPS Module, MHAs, BOBs and RRHs.  
Prior approval required and granted  
29 July 2025

MC/20/1031 Construction of a new raised standing terrace within existing roofed stand and associated works.  
Approved  
2 September 2020

MC/19/0170 Replacement of existing football pitch with all weather pitch.  
Approved  
19 March 2019

MC/16/1481 Removal of eight existing 17.5m floodlights and installation of five 15m floodlights and one 20m telecommunications structure to support 6 telecommunications antennae for shared use by Vodafone and Telefonica together with the installation of 2 dishes and 4 ground based equipment cabinets will provide 3G and 4G mobile electronic communication together with floodlights to be fixed to the 20m structure at 15m.  
Approved  
7 June 2016

## **Representations**

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. KCC Biodiversity, Kent Police and Sport England have also been consulted.

**11 objections (including 2 from the same person)** have been received, in summary raising the following concerns:

- Enhanced traffic/parking issues especially on match days, tournament days and training days, also over a longer period of time.
- Frequent grid lock and difficult to access properties, can yellow lines be added in Bournville Avenue.
- Adverse impact on mental health and anxiety getting in and out of driveways, verbal abuse due to parking.
- Worsening air quality.
- Additional litter.
- Increased noise pollution, will break the peace that a green space should provide, also impact on cemetery visitors, no assessment/mitigation including balls hitting fencing, participants and spectators.
- More light pollution, little respite (7 days until 9pm), floodlights affecting homes in Bournville Avenue unless shielded/hedge planted, other floodlight facilities nearby, what guarantees that floodlights would not extend beyond 9pm.
- Longer hours of use for the park, should be restricted to current park opening times.
- Another encroachment into green space, park is for all, not just football, taking away natural recreation areas, free to use from those who already use the park.
- Already saturation of football and other sports facilities within the area, not an area of need, S106 money would be better used in real deprived areas.
- Plenty of other zones for play at local schools, may take away from them, is this needed/do Chatham FC need more green space to monopolise.
- Other new PlayZones proposed are not in the middle of residential areas.
- Should consider an area not currently used for play.
- Who would manage/be responsible, monitoring and security not addressed, use should not be restricted and controlled by a non-public body/for profit, how will it be ensured it does not become a private extension of Chatham Town Football Club, will it be free for all local residents (being partially funded by the Aldi development at Maidstone Road), who will benefit from any income.
- Chatham Town Football Club expansion, they are outgrowing their facilities in a residential area which is not suitable for further development, they have already marked out a further grassed pitch at the back of their ground.
- Potential precedent for further development of the football ground and/or encroaching into council owned park space.
- No initial consultation with the community most affected, situation could have been alleviated by a requested meeting with Chatham Town Football Club.
- A senior local councillor is a Chatham Town Football Club season ticket holder, concern that their evaluation would not be objection or non-partisan.

**Bournville Avenue Residents Association** object, in summary raising the following concerns:

- Limited public engagement and local consultation has not included the Residents Association.
- Floodlit community pitches at Holcombe Grammar School with noise and light issues, why are more needed.

- Exacerbate noise and light pollution from Chatham Football Club, should be Monday-Friday up to 6pm only to give some respite.
- Sound reducing screens should be applied to the enclosure.
- Increased traffic issues, how will this be managed.
- Will the Playzone remain accessible for all for free.
- The Playzone would restrict access to part of the recreation grounds – possible precedent, valuable open space not just for football.
- Path to the Football Club may mean it is an extension to them, for their purposes, what would their role be.

**Kent Police** have reviewed the application with regard to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and in accordance with the NPPF and advise that applicants/agents should consult them as Designing out Crime Officers (DOCO's) to address CPTED and incorporate Secured By Design (SBD) as appropriate. They use details of the site, relevant crime levels/type and intelligence information to help design out the opportunity for Crime, Fear of Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Nuisance and Conflict.

They advise that defined pedestrian routes to/from the facility are recommended to improve safety and avoid pedestrian and vehicle conflict. They provide advice on lighting and recommend perimeter, boundary and divisional treatments must be a minimum of 2m high around the Football Foundation Playzone and that gates must be secure, lockable from both sides. Site security is also required for the construction phase.

**KCC Ecology** are satisfied that sufficient information has been submitted to determine the planning application.

**Protected/Notable Species** - The submitted preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) has detailed that the site is all modified grassland and a row of trees to the north of the site (the trees are not within the redline boundary). The submitted assessment has not considered if the trees contain features to support roosting bats, however, the proposed site plan demonstrate that scrub is proposed between the pitch and the trees which will help reduce the light spill on to the trees. In addition, the site is located within an area where there is existing flood lighting. Therefore, they accept that an updated PEA is not required to assess the trees.

The proposal will result in an increase in lighting but they understand that there is existing floodlighting adjacent to the site in the football grounds, therefore, the bats that forage/commute within the wider area are likely to be more light tolerant. The lighting will be only switched on when the proposal is in use and not be operational overnight. Therefore, they accept that the lighting is not likely to have a significant impact on the bat population in the wider area.

They are satisfied that the habitats in the redline boundary are unlikely to support protected/notable species and that there is no requirement for protected species surveys to be carried out for this site.

**Biodiversity Net Gain** - Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications for development (unless

exempt) must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), shown via use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric prior to commencement of any development. Having reviewed the submitted information, they consider a 10% BNG is a statutory requirement of this proposed development.

They have reviewed the submitted information and advise that no further information is required prior to determination as the metric has covered the footprint of the majority of the proposed construction works. They advise that the metric has not covered the whole of the redline boundary as an area of modified grassland between the car park and the proposed pitch have not been included. However, as the majority of the grassland will be retained and they are satisfied that the proposal can still achieve BNG on site they accept that it does not need to be amended prior to determination. The metric must be updated for the submission of the biodiversity gain plan.

The proposal will result in the enhancement of the existing grass to other neutral grassland and the planting of scrub and trees. They advise that it doesn't meet the requirements of onsite significant habitat but will have to be actively managed to ensure the BNG can be achieved. If planning permission is granted a condition requiring a landscape and ecological management plan is recommended.

**Sport England** confirm that the proposed development does not fall within their statutory remit. General guidance and advice is available on their website.

## **Development Plan**

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) and are generally considered to conform. Where non-conformity exists, this is addressed in the Planning Appraisal section below.

The Emerging Local Plan has been agreed by Full Council for Reg 19 publication, consultation and has now been submitted under Regulation 22 to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. The policies within this version of the emerging plan have weight in the determination of planning (and associated) applications. However, due to the nature of this proposal, the stage of the emerging Local Plan, the existence of relevant adopted Policies in the Medway Local Plan (2003) and guidance in the NPPF it is considered that the proposal falls to be considered with regard to the adopted policies and guidance in the NPPF.

## **Planning Appraisal**

### *Principle*

It is proposed to provide a PlayZone to enhance the facilities at this sports ground, providing for a wider range of sports at all times of year and during the evening and to encourage wider sports participation.

The sports ground is allocated as protected open space in the Local Plan. Policy L1 of the Local Plan resists the loss of leisure facilities, exceptions including when a similar or better replacement is made within the same catchment area. Policy CF1 resists the loss of community facilities, seeking similar replacement facilities. Policy L3 seeks to protect open space unless sports and recreation facilities can best be implemented or retained and enhanced through redevelopment. In this instance the proposed development is for the continued use of the site for sport and recreation but in an enhanced way.

The site has no specific designation in the draft Local Plan. Policy T28 refers to the loss of publicly accessible open space, which will only be permitted in certain circumstances, and Policy T29 recognises the importance of community facilities, seeking to protect and enhance existing facilities that contribute to the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Paragraph 103 of the NPPF highlights the importance of access to opportunities for sport and physical activity for the health and well-being of communities, with paragraph 104 confirming that existing sports land should not be built on unless in given circumstances, including that the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

In the current case it is considered that the development would enhance the sports provision on the site. Although an informal grassed football pitch would be lost, a larger grassed area would remain and the PlayZone would provide for an increased range of sports in all ground conditions, for a longer period of the day/year. In these circumstances there is no overriding objection in principle to the development.

### *Design*

Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan, Policy T1 of the draft Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF provide relevant guidance. It is proposed to remove some existing fencing (which is past its best) and to provide a surfaced, fenced and floodlit PlayZone within part of this currently fenced area.

From a visual perspective it is not considered that these changes would result in any significant harm. The nature of the development is in character with a sports ground and the site is well away from the boundaries with local residents. The cemetery close by to the north and across Palmerston Road further to the east is noted, however, it is not considered that the development would appear intrusive to users or harmful to heritage. There is an established tree line to the north of the current site, along the boundary with the cemetery, with additional planting proposed between the two.

### *Residential Amenity*

Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan, Policy T1 of the draft Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF include reference to amenity considerations. The site is over 120m from the sports ground boundary with Bournville Road to the south, with dwellings across the other side of this road. It is a minimum of 80m from the boundary with

Palmerstone Road to the east, with the nearest dwellings in this direction being across the junction with Kitchener Avenue. There are trees and other vegetation as well as other sports/recreation facilities between the current site and both of these boundaries, and the site also sits close to the Chatham Town Football Club stadium.

The physical development would not result in any harm to neighbouring amenity due to separation distances. In addition, it is not considered that the use would result in a harmful increase in noise and disturbance, bearing in mind the site context and the position of the PlayZone within the sports ground. Chatham Town Football Club is understood to already operate from 8am until 11pm each day (including clubhouse use) and the PlayZone would not be used after 9pm.

### *Lighting*

Policy BNE5 of the Local Plan, Policy DM4 of the draft Local Plan, and paragraph 198 of the NPPF provide relevant guidance. It is proposed to install four, 8m high LED downward facing floodlights, one in each corner of the PlayZone. The surrounding area has streetlights and within the sports ground the Football Club stadium has floodlighting, as does the Bowling Club. In this context and bearing in mind the separation distance and intervening vegetation between the site and local residents and the trees to the north on the cemetery boundary, it is not considered that the proposed floodlights would result in significant harm. A condition would control hours of use, to 9pm at the latest, and only when the PlayZone is in use. The impact on ecology is considered below.

### *Highways and Parking*

Policies T1 and T13 of the Local Plan, Policies DM18 and DM19 of the draft Local Plan and paragraphs 115-118 of the NPPF specifically refer to transport matters.

The proposed PlayZone would replace an informal grassed football area within the much larger sports ground. It would be controlled by an online booking system which would include a code for its gate. The site is accessible for pedestrians and cyclists and can also be reached by public transport. Although a small-scale local facility, it is recognised that some users may travel by car. There is a car park accessed from Bournville Avenue, near Maidstone Road, with on-street parking on local roads including Palmerstone Road and Bournville Avenue.

Concern has been raised that the use of Chatham Town Football Club already causes parking and traffic issues with associated detriment to local residents including stress and air quality. It is recognised that at busy times for the Football Club, particularly on match days (its capacity is 3,047), as is common for the majority of sporting venues, there is a traffic impact on local streets, with other users of the sports ground, such as the bowling club, also generating traffic and parking needs. However, the current proposal is for a small-scale pitch on an area already used informally for football. The PlayZone would be for one, pre-booked use at a time and would be likely to accommodate a maximum of 7-aside for football, with netball also being 7-aside, 14 players in total. Even with additional parents/supporters, etc, this would be a relatively minor additional use and, aside from the time of Chatham Town Football Club stadium matches, it is likely that there would be some capacity within

the sports ground car park. Users may also prefer to park in Palmerston Road (away from dwellings) rather than Bournville Avenue when possible, using the pedestrian access through which would take them closer to the proposed PlayZone location than the route from the main car park entrance.

In these circumstances it is not considered that refusal on transport grounds could be substantiated, noting paragraph 116 of the NPPF which says that 'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe'.

It is noted that the proposals include a path from the PlayZone directly to the northeast corner of the stadium. This is intended to provide safe pedestrian routes through the stadium ground if users would prefer to use it, particularly in the evening.

### *Trees*

Policy BNE43 of the Local Plan, Policies S1 and T1 of the draft Local Plan and paragraph 136 of the NPPF highlight the importance of trees. There is a row of trees by the north side of the site, the boundary with the cemetery. The proposed PlayZone would be set off this boundary by approximately 9m and new planting is proposed between the two. There are also trees by the eastern end of the Chatham Town Football Club stadium, where it is proposed to provide a surfaced pedestrian path to existing gates into the stadium grounds. An Arboricultural Method Statement has been submitted to address the potential impact on trees, including tree protection fencing and methods of working and, subject to its implementation during the course of the works, the impact on trees is considered acceptable.

### *Ecology*

Policies BNE37, BNE38 and BNE39 of the Local Plan refer to wildlife habitats, corridors and protected species and Policy S2 of the draft Local Plan to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, with paragraphs 187 and 193 of the NPPF providing further relevant guidance.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been submitted with the application. This includes a desk study, badger survey and a ground level tree assessment for bats. No signs of badgers were found, and the adjacent trees were found to have no potential bat roost features. The assessment includes consideration of the impact of the proposed floodlighting on bats and concludes that the impact would be negligible bearing in mind the site context/existing lighting and the limited time of use of the proposed lights.

The development would result in the loss of some modified grassland, poor quality habitat with common species, which would be hard surfaced. However, new planting which would enhance remaining areas is proposed.

KCC Biodiversity, the Councils specialist advisor on ecology, concurs with the conclusions of the submissions and confirms that no further surveys are required. A

condition would control the times of use of the proposed floodlighting which would help to limit the potential for impact on bats.

#### *Biodiversity Net Gain*

Draft Local Plan Policy S2 and paragraphs 187 and 193 of the NPPF refer to biodiversity. All planning applications received in England (with a few exemptions) must now deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) and a BNG Assessment and BNG metric have been provided to address this requirement. These say that, with on-site post-intervention, there would be a change from 0.35 area habitat units to 0.52 area habitat units, a 45.77% gain.

It is noted that the metric does not include the whole of the red line site area (it excludes an area of vegetation to the west of the proposed PlayZone, but not the proposed path, and the pedestrian link through to the car park, neither of which would be altered by the proposed development, aside from by additional planting). However, following advice from KCC Biodiversity, it is considered that the submissions are adequate to establish the baseline for BNG. It is not considered that the habitat is significant with regard to the advice in the National Planning Policy Guidance on BNG and the required 10% gain could, therefore, be secured through the statutory biodiversity gain plan submission. BNG is likely to be achieved on site and an informative would draw attention to the need to update the metric as part of this post-decision submission. A condition requiring a landscape and ecological management plan is also recommended.

#### *Other Matters*

The submissions include a Construction Environmental Management Plan which includes confirmation that there would be no parking or waiting of construction vehicles outside of the site. The proposals generally accord with the advice of Kent Police and an informative on the decision notice will draw attention to their guidance. There is a separate application for advertisement consent for the signage associated with the PlayZone.

Objectors refer to other sports facilities nearby, to a lack of need for additional provision, particularly for football, and to setting a precedent for further development in the park. The current application must be considered on its own merits, and it is an appropriate use for a sports ground, therefore, refusal on these grounds is considered unreasonable from a planning permission perspective. It is also noted that a contribution towards the provision of a PlayZone in this area has been secured as part of the nearby Aldi development at Maidstone Road (reference MC/25/0753), as mitigation for the loss of part of the sports field there.

Although not a planning matter, it is noted that Maidstone Road Sports Ground is a Medway Council facility although other bodies operate within it. The PlayZone would be a Medway Council facility with Chatham Town Football Club being the intended operator (similar to the arrangement for the tennis courts). This does not mean it would be used only by the Football Club, or just for football, with this arrangement having some advantages for all users (such as access via the grounds and its facilities). There would be a fee for using the PlayZone and it would be booked

online. It is intended that coaching, etc, for other sports would take place there, such as netball and cricket.

### **Conclusions and Reasons for Approval**

In summary the enhancement of sports facilities within the sports grounds is welcomed in principle. The alterations would provide for a range of different sports, including football, on an informal football area and would allow year-round use including during evenings. Subject to conditions, the design, visual, amenity, transport, trees, ecology and BNG impacts are considered acceptable bearing in mind the site context and the nature of the development. Approval is, therefore, recommended, including with regard to the policies and guidance detailed above.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Committee for determination due to the extent of the representation expressing views contrary to the recommendation.

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### **Background Papers**

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>