

**Section '3' - Applications recommended for PERMISSION, APPROVAL or CONSENT**

**Application No :** 16/01316/FULL1

**Ward:** Darwin

**Address :** Down House Luxted Road Downe  
Orpington BR6 7JT

**OS Grid Ref:** E: 543154 N: 161150

**Applicant :** Mr John Stevens

**Objections :** NO

**Description of Development:**

Use of part of Middle Field within the Down House estate to provide an overflow visitor car parking facility for up to 50 days per year

Key designations:

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area  
Green Belt  
London City Airport Safeguarding  
Sites of Interest for Nat. Conservation

**Proposal**

Permission is sought for an overflow visitor car park to be used for up to 50 days per year in the 'Middle Field' south of Down House, which would be accessed from Luxted Road. The turf protecting matting previously laid at the sites to protect the land from being damaged by cars using the car park which was granted on a temporary basis under permission refs.09/01434 and 11/03616, would be retained.

This application is effectively a renewal of temporary permission ref.11/03616 which expired in March 2014, but seeks the use of the overflow car park for up to 50 days a year on a permanent rather than temporary basis (temporary permissions having been granted since 2009).

**Location**

Down House is located approximately half a kilometre from the village of Downe and lies within the Green Belt. It is a Grade I Listed Building, but lies outside Downe Village Conservation Area. The gardens at the house are included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at Grade II, with part of the site designated as a site of Nature Conservation Interest.

The proposed car parking area is accessed via an existing gateway onto Luxted Road, and a public footpath runs across the site to the north of the access.

## **Consultations**

No letters of objection have been received from third parties to date.

## **Comments from Consultees**

The Council's Highways Officer has confirmed that, subject to the prior completion of an updated section 106 agreement which required certain measures due to the substandard access to the site along with measures to ensure pedestrian safety along the public right of way (similar to the agreement previously entered into but referring to the current planning reference number), no objections are raised to the granting of a permanent permission for the overflow car park.

## **Planning Considerations**

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the following policies of the Unitary Development Plan and the London Plan:

BE1 Design of New Development  
BE7 Statutory Listed Buildings  
T6 Pedestrians  
T18 Road Safety  
NE2 Development and Nature Conservation Sites  
NE3 Nature Conservation and Development  
L2 Public Rights of Way and Other Recreational Routes

## **Planning History**

A 2-year temporary permission was granted in 2009 (ref: 09/01434) for a temporary overflow visitor car park in the Middle Field for up to 90 days per year, and included alterations to the access and the laying out of a temporary surface.

A further application (ref.11/03616) was granted in 2012 to use the overflow visitor car park for up to 50 days per year, but this permission expired in March 2014.

## **Conclusions**

The main issues relating to the application are the effect that it would have on the character of the area and the impact that it would have on the statutory listed building and the Green Belt.

The applicant has submitted supporting information which shows that the temporary permissions granted over the last 6 years have successfully diverted parking away from Downe Village during the busy months of April through to August. It is forecast that visitor numbers will consistently remain above the capacity of the current permanent car park located to the north of Down House during these months, and a permanent permission is therefore sought.

Alternative options for providing a viable and sustainable solution to increasing permanent parking facilities for visitors to Down House have been previously

looked into by the applicant, eg. acquiring additional adjacent land (unsuccessful) and a trail of a free "park and ride" scheme from Leaves Green (take up was minimal), but a viable alternative which would not further impact on the local environment and community has not been found.

Members may therefore consider that a permanent permission for the use of the overflow visitor car park for up to 50 days per year may now be appropriate, subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement, as it would provide for the growth of visitor numbers without resulting in significant parking and congestion within Downe Village.

From a highways point of view, the planning conditions and obligations previously imposed in the temporary permissions have satisfactorily mitigated against any potential hazards to vehicular or pedestrian safety, and as such, similar conditions and obligations are suggested to be attached to the permanent permission.

In terms of the impact on the Green Belt, by containing the car parking area within the middle field, the visual impact would be minimised as there is dense foliage screening areas along the boundaries, and as such, it would not be highly visible from public vantage points.

In terms of the impact on the Grade I Listed Building, the proposed car park is located over 220m from Down House, and it would not therefore have a detrimental impact on the integrity of the Listed Building.

In conclusion, the proposals are not considered to be harmful to the character or visual amenities of the Green Belt, nor adversely affect the Listed Building.

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on the file ref(s) set out in the Planning History section above, excluding exempt information.

## **RECOMMENDATION: PERMISSION SUBJECT TO THE PRIOR COMPLETION OF A LEGAL AGREEMENT**

**and the following conditions:**

- 1 The convex mirror which was approved under planning permission ref.09/01434 shall be retained in the position previously agreed. The car park shall only be used as such while the mirror is in situ.**

**Reason: In the interest of pedestrian and vehicular safety and in order to comply with Policy T18 of the Unitary Development Plan.**