

Date: 17 October 2022
Our ref: 408813
Your ref: 20220915



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BY EMAIL ONLY - planning.reps@gravesham.gov.uk

Dear Ms Parkin

Planning consultation: Application for a minor material amendment to planning permission reference no. 20190504 (following planning permission reference no. 20220487 for non-material amendment to allow the change of description to: Conversion of existing building with a side extension and a roof extension, the construction of a new residential building to provide residential units (class C3) consisting of one bed, two bed and three bed homes, together with associated car parking, motorcycle and cycles spaces alongside amenity space, private gymnasium and waste and space in Class E as flexi use space) to allow: amendments to Block M only (conversion building), including amendments to unit mix, internal layouts and parking, introduction of additional private and shared amenity space, elevational changes and amended material palette

Location: Former Gravesend And North Kent Hospital (M Block) Clifton Road, Gravesend, Kent

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 28 September 2022 which was received by Natural England on 28 September 2022

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

DESIGNATED SITES [EUROPEAN] – NO OBJECTION SUBJECT TO SECURING APPROPRIATE MITIGATION FOR RECREATIONAL PRESSURE IMPACTS ON HABITAT SITES (EUROPEAN SITES).

Natural England considers that this advice may be used for all applications that fall within the parameters detailed below.

This advice relates to proposed developments that falls within the 'zone of influence' (ZOI) for one or more European designated sites, such as North Kent Special Protection Areas (SPA). It is anticipated that new residential development within this zone is 'likely to have a significant effect', when considered either alone or in combination, upon the qualifying features of the European Site due to the risk of increased recreational pressure that could be caused by that development and therefore such development will require an appropriate assessment.

Your authority has measures in place to manage these potential impacts through a strategic solution which we have advised will in our view be reliable and effective in preventing adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant European Site(s) from such impacts associated with such development. The strategic solution may or may not have been adopted within the local plan but must be agreed to by Natural England.

Natural England is of the view that if these measures, including contributions to them, are implemented, they will be effective and reliable in preventing adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant European Site(s) from recreational impacts for the duration of the development proposed within the relevant ZOI.

However, the application of these measures to avoid adverse effects on site integrity from recreational impacts associated with development proposed within the relevant ZOI should be formally checked and confirmed by your Authority, as the competent authority, via an appropriate assessment in view of the [European Site's conservation objectives](#) and in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). In this regard, Natural England notes the [People Over Wind Ruling](#) by the Court of Justice of the European Union that mitigation may not be taken into account at screening stage when considering 'likely significant effects', but can be considered at appropriate assessment.

Providing that the appropriate assessment concludes that the measures are secured as planning conditions or obligations by your authority to ensure their strict implementation for the full duration of the development, and providing that there are no other likely significant effects identified (on this or other protected sites) as requiring to be considered by your authority's appropriate assessment, Natural England indicates that it is likely to be satisfied that your appropriate assessments will be able to ascertain that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the European Site (from recreational pressure in view of [its conservation objectives](#)). Natural England will likely have no further comment regarding the Appropriate Assessment, in relation to recreational disturbance.

Natural England should continue to be consulted on all proposals where provision of site specific SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) or other bespoke mitigation for recreational impacts that falls outside of the strategic solution is included as part of the proposal. We would also strongly recommend that applicants proposing site specific infrastructure including SANGs seek pre application advice from Natural England through its Discretionary Advice Service. If your consultation is regarding bespoke site-specific mitigation, please reconsult Natural England putting 'Bespoke Mitigation' in the email header.

Reserved Matters applications where the outline permission was granted prior to the introduction of the Strategic Solution, should also be subject to the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and our advice above applies.

Further general advice on the consideration of protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries regarding this letter, for new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Richard Gibson
Consultations Team