



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

by J Pearce MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/W/25/3358471

Unit 21 The Imperial Centre, 41-45 Gatwick Road, Northgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 9RD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr J Dade of Lawn Imperial Limited against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is CR/2023/0140/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the use of land to provide parking together with associated access and hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the use of land to provide parking together with associated access and hardstanding at Unit 21 The Imperial Centre, 41-45 Gatwick Road, Northgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 9RD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref CR/2023/0140/FUL, subject to the conditions in the attached Schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. In October 2024, the Council adopted the Crawley Borough Local Plan (LP), which supersedes the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 and now forms part of the statutory development plan. Policies SD1, CH2, CH3, CH6 and EC3, as referred to on the decision notice, are therefore no longer relevant. Policies SD2, OS3, EC3, ST1, DD1 and DD4 of the LP are, however, relevant and the appellant has had an opportunity to comment on these.
3. The description of development in the banner heading above and my formal decision has been taken from the planning application form. In section E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed from that stated on the application form. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the description given on the original application form.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - highway safety, with regard to pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is to the front of part of a large building within the Manor Royal Business District. Development in the area is typically set back from Gatwick Road to the rear of areas of car parking and open landscaping giving the area a spacious character. The site is largely laid to grass with trees to the front and side, adjacent to existing footways. A footway leads diagonally across the site, dissecting the open area of landscaping.
6. The proposal is for a car park with 16 parking spaces. The parking area would be set back from a footway and cycle path to the side of Gatwick Road. Whilst closer to Gatwick Road than the existing parking areas, the proposal would reflect the existing layout of car parking areas within the areas to the front of buildings. The retention of areas of landscaping to the front and side of the site would preserve the primarily spacious and open character of this part of Gatwick Road.
7. The retained open area includes the provision of additional landscaping, comprising tree and hedge planting. While it is unclear what part of the site is covered by the Detailed Planting Plan¹, the plan indicates that planting would include native species and an area of wildflower grassland. Landscaping at the site, which could be secured by condition if I were minded to allow the appeal, would offset the loss of the existing trees and open areas, and would assist in blending the proposal with the existing open areas within the street scene.
8. The proposed layout would not match that shown in Figure 35 of the Manor Royal Public Realm Strategy 2013, which provides an illustration of Parade improvements on Gatwick Road and includes a new access to the front of the site. Nevertheless, the proposal would help to provide additional parking as well as retaining part of the open areas at the site. Although the development does not consist of a comprehensive enhancement of the parade, there is no substantive evidence before me that such a proposal is likely to take place.
9. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area. The development therefore accords with Policies DD1, DD4 and EC3 of the LP, which collectively require proposals to include development form and architectural quality and specification which complements the existing setting and character of the area, identify which trees are to be removed and replaced in order to mitigate for the visual impact resulting from the loss of the tree canopies and that all development at Manor Royal should contribute positively to the overall setting and environment of the Main Employment Area.

Highway safety

10. To the front of the site is a pedestrian footway and cycle path to the side of Gatwick Road. The footway and cycle path provides dedicated space separate to the road for pedestrians and cyclists, and encourages sustainable modes of transport. A footway dissects the site and connects the footway adjacent to Gatwick Road to the footway to the front of the buildings.
11. The proposal includes a new vehicular access from Gatwick Road. The access would sever the route of the dedicated footway and cycle path leading to an

¹ Drawing Number LLD1814-LAN-DWG-200 Revision 01

obstruction within the otherwise continuous footway and cycle path. Consequently, pedestrians and cyclists would have to cross the new access.

12. The access would include tactile paving on either side to facilitate safe crossing by pedestrians and cyclists and maintain the route of the footway and cycle path. Given the limited scale of the proposal, including the modest width of the access, and the provision of a suitable and safe crossing, the proposal would not demonstrably harm the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists.
13. The footway within the site would be removed as part of the proposal. A new footway would be provided to the side of the proposed parking area. The new footway would allow pedestrians to continue to safely and efficiently access the commercial premises in the area.
14. I conclude that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, with regard to pedestrian and cyclist safety. The development therefore accords with Policies SD2, OS3, EC3, ST1 of the LP, which collectively require that development proposals prioritise the use of accessible and reliable sustainable transport and active travel, prioritise the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport over ease of access by the motorist and include the provision of safe and convenient links to nearby Rights of Way/recreational routes.

Other Matter

15. Little Orchards is a Grade II listed building close to the site. Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their setting.
16. The site is separated from Little Orchards by a boundary formed by an established hedge and mature trees and is within an area primarily characterised by large commercial units and associated car parking. Given the limited intervisibility, the commercial context of the site and the small scale of the development, the proposal would preserve the setting of the listed building.

Conditions

17. Suggested planning conditions have been provided by the Council. I have considered the conditions having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and advice contained in the Planning Practice Guidance. I have adjusted the wording of some conditions to improve precision.
18. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have imposed a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. This is in the interests of certainty.
19. A condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan is required to prevent adverse impacts on the local road network during the construction phase. The quality of the environment would be protected by a condition in respect of hard and soft landscaping. As these relate to the early stages of the development, it is necessary for these conditions to be discharged prior to the commencement of the development.
20. The sustainability of the development, including minimising energy use and climate change would be addressed by including a condition relating to cycle parking and the provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

J Pearce

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing numbers: Plan 01 Rev P2, 2020/5483/001 Rev P5, 2020/5483/002 Rev P4, and 2020/5483/003 Rev P4.
- 3) No development shall take place until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the approved Plan shall be implemented and adhered to throughout the entire construction period. The Plan shall provide details as appropriate but not necessarily restricted to the following matters:
 - the anticipated number, frequency and types of vehicles used during construction;
 - the method of access and routeing of vehicles during construction;
 - access arrangements from the public highway, including temporary accesses and alterations to existing accesses;
 - the parking of vehicles by site operatives and visitors;
 - the loading and unloading of plant, materials and waste;
 - measures for the disposal of waste;
 - the storage of plant and materials used in construction of the development;
 - the erection and maintenance of security hoarding;
 - the provision of wheel washing facilities and other works required to mitigate the impact of construction upon the public highway (including the provision of temporary Traffic Regulation Orders);
 - the prevention of deliveries at the site during school drop-off and pick-up times (generally 0800-0900 and 1430-1530); and
 - details of public engagement both prior to and during construction works.
- 4) No development shall take place until details of a scheme for both hard and soft landscaping have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include the extent of the works and arrangements for their implementation, the planting schedule and specification, removal, replacement and protection of trees, enhancements for biodiversity, a timetable for implementation and provisions for future aftercare and maintenance. The landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before any part of the development is brought into use in accordance with the agreed implementation programme.
- 5) Prior to first use of the car park hereby permitted, the vehicular access serving the development shall be constructed in accordance with the details shown on drawing number 2020/5483/003 Rev P4 and the 3 No. cycle stands, 2 No. electric vehicle charging points, and the disabled bay shall be constructed in accordance with the details shown on drawing number 2020/5483/001 Rev P5.

End of Schedule