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14<sup>th</sup> October 2025

**Subject:** Objection to Proposed Relocation of Wincheap Park & Ride to Thanington Recreation Ground

Dear Planning Team,

I am writing to register my strong objection to the proposed relocation of the Wincheap Park & Ride to Thanington Recreation Ground. As a long-term resident and regular user of the green space, I have grave concerns about the recent proposal. Below I have listed my objections and also some suggested alternatives:

### 1. Loss of Valuable Open Space

Thanington Recreation Ground is the **only freely accessible recreation space in our neighbourhood**, used daily by children, families, sports groups, and local residents.

Concreting over the entire site would directly contradict:

- **Open Space Strategy 2025–2040** – which identifies Thanington as already deficient in open space and commits to protecting existing recreation grounds.
- **NPPF Paragraph 104 (b)** – which states that existing open space should not be built on unless replaced by “*equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location*”. (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-and-safe-communities>)

The proposal fails this test.

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## 2. The Merton Park Proposal is Not an Acceptable Replacement

The proposed **Merton Park sports hub (Policy C6 – Canterbury District Local Plan 2040)** cannot be treated as a replacement for Thanington Recreation Ground:

- It is **1.9 miles away (42 minutes on foot)** and not guaranteed wheelchair accessible, failing the accessibility test under **NPPF Paragraph 96 (c)**, which requires planning policies to ensure *“safe and accessible green infrastructure”*. (corrected 25/09/2025)
- It is a **specialist sports facility** (rugby and football stadium) rather than an informal open space.
- It therefore fails to provide an **equivalent local replacement**, contrary to **Draft Local Plan Policy DS24**, which requires developments to secure *“high-quality and accessible open space provision.”*

## 3. High Financial Cost vs. Cheaper Alternatives

Relocation of the Wincheap Park and Ride to Thanington Recreation Ground will be costly, requiring complete site redevelopment (clearance, hardstanding, drainage, lighting, access roads, security, etc.), and the permanent loss of an irreplaceable green asset.

By contrast, the existing Wincheap Park & Ride site could be **upgraded more cost-effectively** by:

- Constructing a **two-storey decked car park** to increase capacity,
- Installing **solar panel canopies**, aligning with the Council’s **Climate Change Action Plan (2020–2030)**, and
- Improving surface access and circulation.

This would provide additional capacity and enhance sustainability without destroying open space.

At this point I would also request a fully transparent report on daily use of the Park and Ride. I am a frequent user and my first-hand experience of the facility is that it is rarely more than 60% full apart from during the peak Christmas period. I am not convinced that an extension is necessary, and certainly not at the expense of the only green community space in Thanington.

## 4. Ineffective Transport Solution

The relocation **does not address congestion** on the A28 corridor:

- Traffic from **Ashford** and from **London** would still queue along London Road and Thanington Road before reaching the site.
- London bound visitors in particular would then travel by bus back along the same congested route, contrary to the purpose of Park & Ride.

This undermines the transport objectives in the **Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2024)**, which emphasises intercepting vehicles before they enter areas of congestion.

## 5. A Better Alternative: Brownfield Sites at Chartham Hatch or Cockerling Farm

Option 1 - A vacant **car sales site near Chartham Hatch**, already hard-surfaced and advertised for rent, offers a more suitable location:

- It would **intercept A28 traffic earlier**, before vehicles enter the Thanington bottleneck.
- It reuses **brownfield land**, consistent with **NPPF Paragraph 148**, which directs councils to prioritise previously developed land over greenfield.
- It avoids the unnecessary destruction of valued green infrastructure.

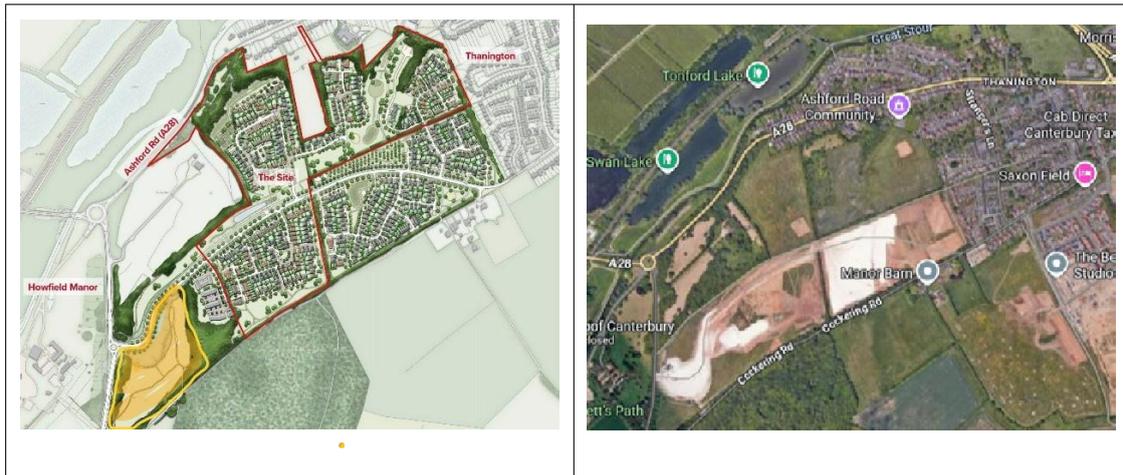
This alternative is both more sustainable and more effective in reducing congestion.



	<p><b>Existing Wincheap Park &amp; Ride:</b> The current site which has a capacity of 580 spaces on a single level, sits well within the congestion zone.</p>
	<p><b>Map view of the Chartham Hatch Brownfield Site:</b> This brownfield site is surrounded entirely by industrial neighbours, not homes. That makes it an optimal location for a multi-storey car park, constructed in the style of the recent West Station car park: Except with no residents overlooked, no loss of amenity, and no need to sacrifice green recreational space. This is a chance to regenerate an abandoned site, and deliver modern parking, outside the Thanington congestion zone therefore reducing traffic pressure and pollution on the Wincheap side of our city.</p>

**Option 2** - An alternative to the disused car sales site at Chartham Hatch could be the section of land highlighted in yellow on the Redrow Homes Cockerling Farm development map.

As you can see from the satellite view below, the land now has the appearance of a brownfield site due to commencement of development, but work has stalled.



In October 2023 Redrow Homes, in an agreement approved with Canterbury City Council, promised to make a contribution of £400,000 to Thanington Resource Centre before the 101st home occupancy on the.

**I strongly suggest that protecting the Recreation Ground and placing the Park and Ride on this spot would be a much better outcome for the community and it would tackle the ever-increasing traffic problems on the A28.**

## 6. Policy Conflicts

The relocation of the Park and Ride to Thanington Rec. is inconsistent with multiple adopted and emerging policies:

- **NPPF Paragraph 103-108** – protection of existing open spaces and ensuring accessible provision.  
([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF\\_December\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf))
- **Draft Local Plan Policy DS24** – requirement for high-quality, accessible open space.
- **Open Space Strategy 2025–2040** – identifies local deficits and commits to protection of recreation grounds.
- **Climate Change Action Plan (2020–2030)** – seeks to increase biodiversity, tree cover, and climate resilience, all of which are undermined by converting grass and trees to tarmac - especially for a facility which will be ineffective in reducing traffic due to poor choice of location.

## 7. Flood Risk and Drainage Concerns

- Concreting over Thanington Recreation Ground will **increase surface runoff** and reduce natural water absorption, significantly raising the risk of **localised flooding along the River Stour**, potentially affecting homes, roads, and other green spaces in the surrounding area.
- The proposal appears to **contravene the principles of sustainable drainage** set out in **NPPF Paragraph 162**, which requires developments to **avoid increased flood risk**

**elsewhere.** Any relocation plan must fully assess and mitigate these risks. This appears to be absent from the current proposal.

## Conclusion

The proposed relocation of the Wincheap Park and Ride is **harmful, ineffective, and contrary to national and local planning policy**. It would destroy the only recreational green space in Thanington while failing to reduce congestion along the A28 corridor.

A more logical and policy-compliant approach is to:

1. **Upgrade the existing Wincheap Park & Ride** through decked parking and solar panels (only if proved to be necessary after careful and honest analysis of capacity data), and/or
2. **Investigate the Chartham Hatch car sales site or the Cockerling Farm site** as a genuinely congestion-reducing Park & Ride alternative.

I therefore urge the Council to withdraw its proposal to relocate the Park & Ride to Thanington Recreation Ground.

Yours faithfully,

Arkadiusz Kowalski