RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Committee refuses planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development (on a seasonal basis) would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances to justify an exception to policy; further harm to the Green Belt would be caused by the loss of openness and visual amenity resulting from the erection of the marquee and the use of the overspill parking area, and a loss of tranquillity for users of the adjacent Country Park resulting from the increase in noise and activity associated with the use of the marquee that would be sited in close proximity to the boundary, contrary to policy CM3 of the Core Strategy, policy BP11 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document, policy 7.16 of the London Plan (2016), policy G2 of the draft London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The marquee, when erected, would be harmful to the character and open setting of the Farmhouse Tavern, a locally listed building, contrary to policies BP2 and BP11 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document.

3. The site is located in an area of poor public transport accessibility and the proposed marquee would significantly intensify the existing use attracting a large number of concentrated traffic movements which given the siting of the access/egress of the venue and the adjacent bend in the road would be harmful to highway safety and contribute to additional queuing and traffic congestion on Dagenham Road contrary to policy BR10 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document.
SUMMARY

Existing Site

The Farmhouse Venue, a former public house then known as the Farmhouse Tavern, is a locally listed building situated within the Green Belt at the junction of Dagenham Road with The Chase. It is surrounded by Eastbrookend Country Park.

The site is in use as an events venue, and has planning permission for such use, which is subject to a condition limiting the maximum number of guests to 180.

The application proposes the erection of a temporary marquee in the grounds of the Farmhouse Venue, on a seasonal basis for up to 16 weeks per year, for use as a function venue with a capacity of up to 400 guests.

Scheme details:

| Planning policy designation of site | • Green Belt.  
| • Existing building is on Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.  
| • Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.  
| • Tree Preservation Order. |
| Existing capacity of venue | 180 guests (on year-round basis). |
| Proposed capacity of venue | 400 guests (restricted to 16 weeks per year, 180 at other times). |
| Existing car parking spaces | 61 |
| Proposed car parking spaces | 93 |
| Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) | 1b on a scale of 0 – 6b where 6b is excellent. |

The proposed additional car parking spaces would be situated on land between the existing Farmhouse Venue and the Millennium Centre car park.

Inappropriate development within the Green Belt

Green Belt policy is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Para. 133 of the NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

The policy states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt is inappropriate (aside from certain exceptions such as buildings required for agriculture). The proposed temporary marquee is therefore defined by the policy as inappropriate development.

Para. 143 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

The following paragraph (No. 144) states that when considering a planning
application for inappropriate development, local planning authorities should give substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt and that ‘very special circumstances’ to justify an exception to the policy, will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The proposed temporary marquee and overspill car park would result in inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would be harmful as a result of a loss of openness and a loss of visual amenity to the Green Belt. It is considered that there are no very special circumstances of sufficient importance that would outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and other harm to the Green Belt and therefore planning permission should be refused in accordance with the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan.

Setting of locally listed building

The proposed structure would be a substantial construction within the setting of the locally listed former Farmhouse Tavern, and it is considered that this would harm the character and appearance of the existing building.

Highway conditions

The expansion in venue capacity that would result from the development is predicted to cause additional traffic congestion on Dagenham Road and to result in queuing on the highway to gain access to the site at arrival times for functions. It is considered that this would be detrimental to highway safety and the flow of traffic on Dagenham Road.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Officer:</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Contact Details:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simon Bullock</td>
<td>Principal Development Management Officer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:simon.bullock@befirst.london">simon.bullock@befirst.london</a> 020 8227 3803</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1.1 The Farmhouse Venue, formerly the Farmhouse Tavern, is located at the junction of Dagenham Road and The Chase. It backs onto Eastbrookend Country Park and is situated within the Green Belt.

1.2 The building is a locally listed former public house and is now in use as a function venue following the grant of planning permission for this change of use by the Development Control Board in 2015. An associated planning condition restricts the capacity of the venue to 180 guests.

1.3 The general surroundings are open parkland to each side of the site. Approximately 50 metres to the east of the site is the Millennium Centre and associated car park, and beyond this is a Traveller’s caravan site on The Chase. Approximately 100 metres to the north-east is an angling lake operated by Bardag Angling Association. The nearest houses to the site are approximately 300 metres away on Dagenham Road to the north, and approximately 250 metres distance to the west, also on Dagenham Road.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL
2.1 The application is for a temporary (seasonal) marquee to be located within the rear garden of the venue, with a capacity of up to 400 guests, and therefore if granted, this would effectively delete the existing condition restricting the capacity of the venue to 180 guests. The applicant has confirmed that 400 is the total number of guests that would be on the site at one time, and would accept a condition to that effect.

2.2 The application seeks permission to erect the marquee for events for up to 16 weeks per year during the Easter period (2 weeks) and between July and September each year (14 weeks). For the remaining part of the year the marquee would be dismantled, and the site left open.

2.3 The marquee would be 4.5m in height with an area of 660m². The structure would have a capital T-shape with dimensions of 35m x 15m (the top of the T) and 15m x 9m (the tail of the T). It would be in the rear garden area of the building, formerly the beer garden of the public house. It would be positioned close to the rear of the Farmhouse building (1.6m at the closest point).

2.4 The materials of the structure would be a mixture of clear glass panels, and coloured uPVC panels, with a roof that would be green in colour with a camouflage design intended to reduce its visual impact.

2.5 The marquee would be clearly visible in views from the adjacent Country Park including the footpath across the park that is close to the rear boundary of the site.

2.6 The venue has an existing parking area currently providing parking spaces for 61 cars. However, a proposed alteration to the vehicular access to the site, described further below, would reduce the capacity of the existing parking areas to 47. However, in addition a proposed overspill car parking area on adjacent land within the applicant’s ownership would provide a further 46 spaces resulting in a maximum car parking provision of 93 spaces.

2.7 The additional parking area would be located on an area of grassland that the applicant has acquired, situated between the curtilage of the Farmhouse Venue and the Millennium Centre car park. The proposal is to retain this as a grassed area but to install a metal mesh which the grass grows through. This is designed for vehicular use and protects the grass. It has already been used successfully on the front lawn of the Farmhouse Venue.

2.8 The land within the existing curtilage of the building is covered by a Tree Preservation Order that protects various individual trees on the site. The proposed overspill parking area is also subject to a Tree Preservation Order that protects all trees within this area.

2.9 The proposed parking area would require the removal of 7 trees on this land varying in height between 1.5m and 8m including elder, oak, sycamore, and hawthorn species. All the proposed removals have been assessed, with the
exception of one Category B (moderate quality) tree, as Category C trees (poor quality).

2.10 The tree screen along the east and west boundaries of this land would be retained.

2.11 The applicant has also submitted a proposed landscaping scheme in association with the proposed development that proposes the planting of a native hedgerow to the perimeter of the overspill parking area, and the planting of a variety of native trees, approximately 10, within the garden to the rear of the main building.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

3.1 The following planning applications have been submitted since 2011 and are relevant to the current proposal.

11/00966/FUL - Erection of pavilion within public house garden and erection of ramp to front entrance and side staircase extension to the Farmhouse Tavern in connection with use of the premises for wedding and other events, and associated car parking and boundary fencing and gates; REFUSED AND DISMISSED ON APPEAL.

The above application followed the unauthorised erection of the pavilion though the use did not commence. An enforcement notice was issued, and a subsequent appeal was dismissed. The notice requiring removal of the pavilion and associated fencing was then complied with. The structure in question was similar in design, scale and construction to the proposal which is the subject of the current application, though the pavilion the subject of the 2011 application was larger (6.5m in height compared with 4.5m in height in respect of the current marquee proposal, and with an area of 840m2 compared with the currently proposed 660m2). Additionally, fewer parking spaces were provided in comparison with the current application.

13/00333/FUL - Change of use to function venue with ancillary restaurant use; REFUSED.

14/01256/FUL - Change of use to function venue with ancillary restaurant use and associated erection of single storey side extension and ramp to provide wheelchair access and accessible toilet; PERMITTED.

The latter case is the planning permission referred to above under which the business is currently operating.

16/00755/FUL - Application for removal of conditions following grant of planning permission: Removal of conditions 9 and 11 of 14/01256/FUL to allow temporary buildings and structures e.g. marquees to be erected on site and to remove limit on number of attendees; WITHDRAWN.

17/00439/FUL - Erection of permanent marquee in the grounds for use as function venue for up to 400 guests and provision of additional car parking
spaces on land between the existing Farmhouse Venue and the Millennium Centre car park; REFUSED.

The above application (17/00349/FUL) was the most recent comparable proposal for the site. This scheme was for the same marquee structure as currently being proposed but to be erected on a permanent year round basis. The proposed access and parking arrangement were slightly different which will be discussed further below.

The application was refused on the following grounds of inappropriate development within the Green Belt, harm to the setting of the locally listed building, harmful impact on highway congestion and highway safety, and potential harm to ecology. The full reasons for refusal are copied below:

i. The proposed development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances to justify an exception to policy; further harm to the Green Belt would be caused by the loss of openness and visual amenity resulting from the erection of the permanent marquee and the use of the overspill parking area, and a loss of tranquillity for users of the adjacent Country Park resulting from the increase in noise and activity associated with the use of the marquee that would be sited in close proximity to the boundary, contrary to policy CM3 of the Core Strategy and policy BP11 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document and the National Planning Policy Framework.

ii. The marquee would be harmful to the character and open setting of the Farmhouse Tavern, a locally listed building, contrary to policies BP2 and BP11 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document.

iii. The site is located in an area of poor public transport accessibility and the proposed marquee would significantly intensify the existing use attracting a large number of concentrated traffic movements which given the siting of the access/egress of the venue and the adjacent bend in the road would be harmful to highway safety and contribute to additional queuing and traffic congestion on Dagenham Road contrary to policy BR10 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document.

iv. The application does not include an adequate assessment of the impact of the proposed overspill parking area on ecology, and consequently the development has the potential to cause harm to the ecological value of the site contrary to policy BR3 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document.

The applicant did not appeal against this decision. The current application seeks to address these reasons for refusal, and this will be analysed below.

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Publicity
4.2 **Neighbouring Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of consultation</th>
<th>18 January 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total letters sent</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total responses received</td>
<td>1,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of objections</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in support</td>
<td>251 letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,087 petition signatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of other representations (neither objecting or supporting)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of those who have responded to the consultation process (where an address is given) are from local addresses in the general area of the site, or from other parts of the Borough.

The key issues raised by objectors relate to:

- Disturbance to the peace and tranquillity of the country park.
- Loss of openness to the Green Belt.
- Potential noise nuisance to neighbours.
- Traffic generation and overspill parking on adjacent streets.
- Public transport to the site is poor.

The key issues raised by supporters relate to:

- The development will help conserve the historic building.
- The use of the venue will contribute to local jobs and businesses,
- Activity at the site helps make users of the country park feel safe.
- The marquee complements its surroundings.
- Large events venues should not be forced to open in industrial locations due to the lack of alternative sites.

A letter of support was received from the Federation of Small Business, of which the applicant is a member. This states that the existing business at the site is struggling without the proposed facility. It points out that similar developments have been permitted in the Green Belt elsewhere and expresses the view that the impact of the development can be adequately mitigated. The proposal, it states, would contribute to local employment and business opportunities.

4.3 **External and Internal Consultation**

A summary of responses received from external and internal consultees is set out below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transport Development Management</strong></th>
<th>These matters are addressed in the Transport Section below.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This proposal will negatively affect traffic congestion and parking on the local road network when events take place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majority of functions will have a start time where those attending will tend to arrive together at the same time but because of the lack of public transport (the site has a poor PTAL score of 1b) those attending events will generally travel to this site by means of private vehicles.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This view is supported by the fact that an overspill car park is proposed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is considered that even with this additional car parking provision there is potential for events to result in additional demand for offsite parking in the area which has no parking restrictions, and this may harm highway safety due to the location of the site on a bend in the main road.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development would result in additional traffic congestion at the site entrance and cause queuing on the highway with a consequent negative impact on highway safety.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Access Officer</strong></th>
<th>The applicant has submitted amendments to address these points.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Access Officer requested amendments to alter the width of doors within the structure and to improve the accessible toilet provision.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Environmental Health Officer</strong></th>
<th>In the event that permission was to be granted it is considered that these matters can be adequately addressed through the imposition of appropriate conditions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Officer states he has no records of complaints in relation to the current use.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>He notes that the closest residential units are at the Travellers' site to the east. His indicative calculation is that entertainment noise could cause a negative impact on residents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the absence of a site-specific noise assessment he proposes the imposition of a condition to restrict noise at the venue, together with conditions relating to external lighting and to prevent the use of fireworks at the site.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Designing Out Crime Officer</strong></th>
<th>In the event that permission was to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the event that permission was to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations proposed relating to boundary treatment, external lighting, and CCTV coverage for the proposal.

Also requests that a condition be imposed in the event that permission is granted, requiring the submission of crime prevention measures for approval.

**LBBD Ranger Service**

Object to the proposal for the following reasons:

- Potential light pollution.
- Noise pollution from events.
- Previous events have resulted in guests using the Millennium Centre car park to the detriment of visitors to the country park.

These matters are addressed within the report below.

**Arboricultural Officer**

States that the proposed development would cause no significant loss of trees. The proposed tree removals of a few elderberries, oak saplings, sycamore and hawthorn would not cause harm visually or in terms of loss of species.

Further details would be required of the proposed replacement planting to provide mitigation, in order to ensure that this adequately compensates for the losses.

In the event that permission is granted, a root protection condition should be imposed.

In conclusion, the proposal can be carried out without seriously impacting trees subject to conditions and appropriate native replacement planting.

In the event that permission was to be granted, the relevant conditions can be imposed in order to ensure a net gain in the quantity and quality of tree coverage.

5.0 LOCAL FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The proposed development would be liable for the Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) at a rate of £25 per square metre resulting in a contribution of £16,500.

5.2 The development would also be liable for the Borough CIL at a rate of £10 per square metre index linked from 2015 resulting in a contribution of £8,230.59.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE
7.0 ANALYSIS

7.1 Principle of the Development

Green Belt

7.1.1 The proposed marquee would result in a loss of openness to the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; and that the essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

7.1.2 The NPPF defines such development within the Green Belt as inappropriate, and states that such proposals should be refused permission unless there are very special circumstances where the harm caused by
inappropriateness together with any other harm is clearly outweighed by other circumstances.

7.1.3 Summary of Green Belt policy and officer’s assessment:

Is the proposed development defined as appropriate within the Green Belt? **No**

Are there any ‘very special circumstances’ that outweigh the harm to the Green Belt?

The applicant has submitted a supporting statement claiming that the benefits of the scheme amount to ‘very special circumstances’.

Officers have assessed the submission and conclude that there are no ‘very special circumstances’ that would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

Planning permission should be refused in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Development Plan policy.

7.1.4 The applicant has argued that the following very special circumstances exist that would justify the granting of planning permission for inappropriate development:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant’s very special circumstances case</th>
<th>Officer assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A)</strong> An economically viable business at the site will enable the continued maintenance and protection of the Farmhouse Tavern building which is a locally listed heritage asset.</td>
<td>In relation to viability, the applicant has submitted a report prepared by Chartered Accountants that compares the options of utilising the existing Farmhouse Tavern building only for events; utilising the Tavern building and holding larger events in temporary marquees that are erected and dismantled for each event; and utilising the site for functions with the benefit of a temporary marquee erected for a few weeks, as is the subject of this application. The conclusion applicant’s report is that only the latter is profit making. The existing building is stated to be too small to cater for the demand for larger functions and events at this scale are stated to be loss making. The option of utilising a temporary marquee (which also does not currently have planning permission) is also stated to be loss making due to the additional labour costs of erecting and dismantling the structure which it is calculated on average takes 69% of the sales revenue for each event, resulting in a net loss of 32% for each event. Whilst there would be some benefit to the local economy in a profitable business operating at the site, this is not a very special circumstance that would justify harm to the Green Belt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B)</strong> The existing business, restricted to the capacity of the existing building is not economically viable; and the proposed development would contribute to the local economy and employment opportunities, and provide a facility that can serve the local community.</td>
<td>The building appears to currently be in a good state of repair, due to the actions of the applicant. With regard to the continued maintenance and protection of the Farmhouse Tavern building (which is on the Council’s Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest), the marquee is intended to operate in conjunction with the Tavern building, with the former public house being used as a reception area for events and the banqueting element being held within the marquee. It is considered that the proposed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
development does have the potential to contribute to the continued maintenance of the locally listed heritage asset. However, by itself this is not considered to be a very special circumstance that would justify inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the proposed development is the only viable use of the site which would enable the continued maintenance of the building.

**C) The proposal would enable larger events to be held that would help to serve cultural needs.** Specifically, some ethnic communities tend to hold large functions where the expectation is to invite a wide circle of family and friends. There is a shortage of such venues available in the local area. The proposed development would help to address this need.

The applicant argues that there is a shortage of larger function venues in the area and that this disadvantages some communities that require such facilities. Whilst this maybe the case, detailed evidence has not been provided in support of this argument, or to demonstrate that such a new facility could not be provided in a non Green Belt location. The applicant has submitted a list of other planning applications for development of a similar character in other parts of London and elsewhere. However, this simply demonstrates that there is a demand for such facilities but does not provide any analysis of the level of need in relation to current provision.

This is not therefore considered to be a very special circumstance, and even if some weight were to be given to such stated community needs, this must be balanced against the benefit to the wider community of maintaining the openness and character of the Green Belt and Country Park.

**D) The proposed use has synergy with existing and proposed uses of Eastbrookend Country Park, in that guests at the marquee may be encouraged to visit the park whilst they are there, and attendance at the venue would raise the profile of the park.** It is also correctly stated that the Council’s Parks and Open

The applicant argues that there is a synergy between the proposed development at the site, and the existing and proposed uses of Eastbrookend Country Park. The suggestion is that attendance by guests at the events venue will encourage further recreational use of the park. Also, that it has been proposed that the Country Park itself is a suitable location for events.
Spaces Strategy 2017 proposes that Eastbrookend Country Park could be utilised for festival style events.

Policy within the National Planning Policy Framework states:

*Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.*

These objectives are already provided by the Country Park, and the proposed development does not of itself enhance the recreational value of this part of the Green Belt.

The applicant refers to the Council’s Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2017 which does state that the Country Park could be utilised for festival style events. However, any such activities would be likely to be occasional one-off events and would not result in semi-permanent development within the Green Belt as does the application proposal.

This argument is not therefore accepted, and it is concluded that this is not a very special circumstance that would justify the proposed development.

| 7.1.5 | It is concluded, as set out in detail within the table above, that there are no very special circumstances that would justify the proposed inappropriate development within the Green Belt and therefore planning permission should be refused. |
| 7.1.6 | In addition to the harm caused by inappropriateness it is considered that the proposed development would be harmful due to the loss of openness and that it would be harmful to the tranquillity and visual amenity of the Green Belt, particularly in views from the footpath within the Country Park to the rear of the site where it would appear as an urbanising feature within this semi-natural environment. |
| 7.1.7 | The only difference in terms of the impact on the Green Belt between the last planning application for the marquee that was refused, and the current proposal is the seasonal basis on which it is now proposed. At times when the marquee is erected the harm to the Green Belt would be equivalent to that which led to the refusal of the previous application for a permanent |
structure. The proposed development would remain ‘inappropriate’ for the reasons set out above.

7.1.8 It is also noted that the marquee would be erected for approximately one third (31%) of each year, and that this would be concentrated in the summer months when the Country Park is likely to be most visited, such that the negative impact of the proposed use would be greater.

7.1.9 The NPPF (paragraph 141) states that opportunities should be made within the Green Belt to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity, amongst other matters. It is considered that the proposed development would conflict with these objectives.

7.1.10 In respect of the enforcement notice appeal (ref. APP/Z5060/C/12/2175183) which related to the previously installed permanent marquee at the site the Inspector stated: “this is a sizeable and intrusive structure that is alien and discordant in this context, significantly eroding the contribution to the openness of the surroundings that was previously made by the grounds of the Tavern, and detracting appreciably from the undeveloped character of the country park. For these reasons it therefore harms the visual amenities and the openness of the area.”

7.1.11 With regard to the Inspector’s comment it should be noted that the previous marquee had a white roof and sides (excluding the glazing) whereas the currently proposed marquee roof would be green camouflage. The previous marquee was 2m higher than the current proposal and the tree screen around the site boundary is now more mature.

7.1.12 It is considered that the intensification in the existing use that would result from the provision of the marquee would be harmful to the quiet enjoyment of the Country Park environment, as a result of the additional traffic and car parking, general activity, music and lighting.

7.1.13 In respect of noise the Inspector stated: “I consider the use of the structure is likely to cause a level of noise that would detract from the quiet and peaceful nature of the adjacent country park, undermining the opportunity it provides for outdoor recreation.”

7.1.14 The proposed overspill grassed parking area that would be required to serve the expanded facility would also be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. This land is partially screened by an existing line of trees to its east side, and the applicant proposes additional tree planting to the southeast boundary to provide further screening of the parking area from the Country Park and a hedgerow along the boundary with The Chase. Whilst such screening will help to reduce the visual impact of the proposed parking area the parked cars would remain visible particularly when the trees are not fully in leaf. This would have a negative impact on the visual amenity and tranquillity of the Green Belt.

7.1.15 It is noted that since the Inspector’s decision, trees that have been planted along the boundaries of the site have grown and therefore the visual impact of the proposed development has been reduced relative to that time and
that the applicant is proposing to undertake further tree and hedgerow planting. Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that such a proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt or prevent its harm to the Green Belt in other respects, and therefore the proposed development remains contrary to policy.

7.1.16 In his summary in relation to the Green Belt the Inspector stated: “Accordingly I conclude the works harm the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt, conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, and diminish the opportunities for outdoor recreation in the country park.”

7.1.17 Whilst, as stated above, the marquee in respect of the appeal scheme was slightly larger than that now proposed and the colour has changed, planning Inspector’s decisions are material planning considerations and should be given substantial weight.

7.1.18 The applicant has submitted details of a number of examples of similar marquee style events venues located within the Green Belt that have been granted planning permission elsewhere. Some of these have planning permission on a permanent basis, and others restrict the use to a certain number of months each year, as is being proposed within this application.

7.1.19 The two examples that are relatively local are at Lakeview, Forest Road in Redbridge, and Chigwell Hall in Epping Forest.

7.1.20 However, each planning application should be determined on its own merits with specific regard to its impact, which will be different in each case, depending on the precise nature of the proposal and its specific context.

7.2 Heritage

7.2.1 The proposed marquee will be a substantial structure that would be clearly visible within the setting of the locally listed Farmhouse Tavern building. The footprint of the marquee would be significantly larger than that of the original building.

7.2.2 The marquee would substantially block views of the building particularly from the adjacent Country Park land to the rear of the site (south and west). The marquee is not considered unattractive, but it has no specific architectural merit, and does not have any relationship to the Farmhouse Tavern in terms of design. It is concluded that the proposed structure would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Farmhouse Tavern, however this must be balanced with the potential for the proposed development to contribute to the continued maintenance of the locally listed heritage asset.

7.2.3 In relation to this matter, the Inspector for the enforcement appeal considered that the marquee would occupy a sizeable proportion of the Tavern’s spacious grounds, and visually it would constrain and conceal the Tavern and as a result harm the significance of this heritage asset.
7.3 **Transport**

7.3.1 The submitted Transport Statement concludes that the proposed additional traffic generation resulting from the development would not adversely affect existing junction capacity within the wider road network.

7.3.2 The Transport Statement estimates that the parking demand for a typical 400 capacity event would be 79 vehicles. This, it states, is based upon parking surveys that have been carried out for 11 events that have previously been held at the site where a travel survey of guests was carried out.

7.3.3 The applicant states therefore that the proposed parking capacity of 93 spaces is adequate to serve the needs of the development.

7.3.4 The Transport Development Management Officer states that parking may increase on the highway as a result of the proposed development. Whilst there is potential for this to occur, the proposed parking capacity of 93 is substantial and somewhat in excess of the typical parking demand estimated by the Transport Consultant that is stated to be based upon previous experience of events at the site. In the circumstances, the proposed level of parking provision to serve the development is considered to be adequate.

7.3.5 The Transport Development Management Officer also objects on the grounds that the proposed development would result in additional traffic congestion on Dagenham Road and in particular would result in queuing at the access into the site at peak periods when guests are arriving for events.

7.3.6 The applicant’s Transport Statement supports the view that there is potential for the use of the venue to contribute to additional peak traffic congestion. However, this is only at specific times and days of the week, and it is unlikely that events would be booked for every such occasion.

7.3.7 Nevertheless, it has been assessed that the proposed development would cause additional traffic generation and queuing on Dagenham Road and this would be harmful to the free flow of traffic and have a negative impact on the road network.

7.3.8 The vehicular access point into the site is on a tight bend within the road, and further intensification of the use of the access would be likely to diminish the degree of safety in the operation of the existing junction.

7.3.9 The site currently has two vehicular access points from Dagenham Road, one is adjacent to the junction between The Chase and Dagenham Road (at the north-east corner of the site) and the other is at the north-west corner of the site. The previous application proposed to retain the use of the two existing accesses.

7.3.10 The current application proposes that the access adjacent to The Chase be reserved for emergency access only, and that the north-west access point be the sole access for general use. This is to address the concern
expressed previously by the Council that the use of the north-east access point is hazardous due to potential conflict with vehicles entering or leaving The Chase.

7.3.11 Whilst it is considered that this proposed change would improve the situation, the Transport Development Management Officer has maintained his objection as set out above, as the north-west access remains close to the sharp bend in the road and The Chase junction. This change also does not affect the Transport Development Management Officer’s objection on the grounds of highway congestion. It is therefore concluded that the proposal remains unacceptable on highway grounds.

7.4 Ecology

7.4.1 The planning application site is designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, a designation which also covers The Chase and Eastbrookend Country Park.

7.4.2 An ecological appraisal was submitted by the applicant in support of the proposal. The main conclusions of the report are that the area of land proposed for the car park has the potential to provide bird nesting habitat. The report also confirms that this area has negligible potential to provide reptile habitat due to its management as amenity grassland with the grass cut relatively short.

7.4.3 In respect of the previous application, the then submitted ecological appraisal stated that a small part of the area of the proposed overspill car park had the potential to provide reptile habitat in areas of scrub and long grassland. However, this scrub has since been cleared, and cut, in the same manner as the adjacent Country Park. Planning consent was not required for this work.

7.4.4 In relation to bird nesting the solution is to impose a condition on any planning permission that prevents tree and vegetation clearance within the bird nesting season, with a proviso that where clearance is required within the season it may be carried out if a qualified ecologist undertakes a survey and confirms that there are no nesting birds present.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to advance equality of opportunity in the exercise of its functions. It is not considered that the planning policy objective of protecting the Green Belt from encroachment raises any equalities issues.

8.2 It could be argued, as does the applicant, that the provision of a large function venue would advance equality of opportunity for cultural groups that tend to hold large weddings and celebrations where there is a stated shortage of such facilities available. Culture is not a ‘protected characteristic’ within the Equality Act, though ‘Race’ which can include nationality; ethnic or national origin is.
9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 The proposed marquee and additional car parking would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances to overcome the harm. The development would adversely affect the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and reduce its tranquillity.

9.2 The proposed scale and siting of the marquee is such that it would harm the character and open setting of the locally listed Farmhouse Tavern building, but this must be balanced with the potential of the proposed development to facilitate a commercially viable business at the site that would enable the long-term retention and maintenance of this former public house.

9.3 The intensification in the use of the site would result in additional traffic queues on Dagenham Road associated with events at the venue, and would have a negative impact on highway safety due to the existing poor layout of the vehicular access to the site.

9.4 It is recommended that planning permission be refused for the reasons set out in the Recommendation section of this report.