

REPORT SUMMARY

REFERENCE NO - 15/505354/FULL		
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Variation of conditions 2 and 6 attached to the full planning permission reference 14/0145, for the erection of 7 units for a mixture of B1, B2 and B8 uses, including the renovation of the existing building, with appropriate provision for access and car parking, in order to permit open storage of building materials in identified locations, and to permit the installation of a mezzanine floor.		
ADDRESS Units F2 and F3, Integra, Bircholt Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 9GQ		
RECOMMENDATION Grant planning permission		
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION Will not result in any material visual harm to the character of the area or erode the free flow of traffic or highway safety in the locality.		
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE The Council owns the freehold of the application site.		
WARD Park Wood Ward	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL Boughton Monchelsea	APPLICANT Grafton Merchanting GB Ltd AGENT Armstrong Rigg Planning
DECISION DUE DATE 13/10/15	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 13/10/15	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 22 nd July 2015

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The application site forms part of a development of 7 commercial units located with a large industrial area known as Parkwood Industrial Estate. The application site is located on the east side of Bircholt Road, just opposite the road junctions with Heronden Road and Coldred Road. The 7 commercial units have planning permission for a mixture of B1 (business), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) uses.
- 1.02 The current proposal relates to two of the seven commercial units that are known as units F2 and F3. Unit F2 is occupied by Plumbase Industrial and unit F3 occupied by Buildbase with both businesses providing retail trade wholesale uses.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The approval under reference MA/14/0145 granted planning permission for the erection of 7 units for a mixture of B1, B2 and B8 uses, including the renovation of the existing building, with appropriate provision for access and car parking. The current

proposal seeks to vary conditions 2 and 6 that are attached to this planning permission. These conditions are worded as follows:

Condition 2:

No open storage of plant, materials, products, goods for sale or hire or waste shall take place on any part of the application site.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Condition 6:

No additional floor space shall be created inside the buildings hereby permitted without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the car parking provided continues to meet the needs of the buildings approved in the interests of highway safety.

- 2.02 The applicant has advised that the occupiers of business units F2 and F3 require additional storage in the open area at the front of the site and the occupier of unit F3 also wishes to install a mezzanine floor. These works are required to meet the operational needs of the existing occupiers with unit F2 in use as Plumbase Industrial and unit F3 occupied by Buildbase.
- 2.03 The original planning application showed four separate proposed open storage areas.
- The open storage area required by Buildbase (31 metres wide by 19 metres deep- 589 square metres) was to be used for racks or pallets and located immediately in front of unit F3.
 - The other areas of storage consisted of three narrow strips of cantilever racking in front of units F1 and F2 covering a total area 100 square metres.
 - The total area of open storage was 689 square metres and the height of all the storage was not to exceed 5 metres.
- 2.04 In response to concerns expressed by officers regarding visual impact, particularly in relation to the rectangular area in front of unit F3, the proposal has been amended as follows:
- The three areas of storage originally proposed to the front of units F1 and F2 (100 square metres) have been replaced with a covered store to the front of unit F2 (25 square metres) and two storage areas located at right angles to the front of units F2 and F3 (total of 47 square metres). The first area in front of unit F2 provides cantilever racking and measures 2 metres wide by 15 metres long. The second area in front of unit F3 provides pallet racking and measures a metre wide by 17 metres long.
 - The original large area of proposed open storage (589 square metres) located in front of unit F3 has been divided into three separate smaller areas covering a total of 133 square metres. Two areas of storage are located at right angles to the frontage of unit F3. The first area, storing facing bricks and blocks, measures 4 metres wide and projects just over 15 metres from the front of the building. The

second area provides a line of cantilever racking that is 2 metres wide and 14 metres long. A secure store area covers an area of 45 square metres.

- The revised open storage areas cover a total of 134 square which is a reduction of 554 square metres from the original submission. The applicant has also confirmed that they would accept a planning condition restricting the storage to a maximum height of 4 metres (originally 5 metres).

2.05 The materials to be stored externally comprise weather resistant materials including timber, concrete slabs, metals and stone and it has been confirmed that these materials do not require plastic or cardboard protection. The applicant also advises that the site will be positively managed to ensure that the storage remains clean and tidy and have highlighted that this management is in the applicant's own interests.

2.06 The proposed internal mezzanine floor will provide 210 square metres of additional floorspace for Buildbase who occupy unit F3. The applicant has stated that the mezzanine floor will provide additional storage space and that the proposal does not involve any external changes to the building.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY :

3.01 MA/15/505333: Variation of condition 6 of 14/0145 (Application for full planning permission for the erection of 7 units for a mixture of B1, B2 and B8 uses, including the renovation of the existing building, with appropriate provision for access and car parking - to permit the retention of the installed mezzanines in Units F1 and F2 (585 square metres) – **UNDETERMINED**

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2000: retained policies R18 and T13,

5.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

5.01 69 neighbouring properties notified – 1 objection received that is summarised as follows:

- Notwithstanding the site is surrounded by similar industrial uses, outside storage will result in a harmful impact on the character or appearance of the area.
- The condition precluding outside storage was imposed for a purpose and does not see any change in circumstances justifying any relaxation here.
- Will require some weather protection which add further to harmful visual impact.
- No other outside storage in this high quality purpose built complex and allowing it will encourage other to the detriment of the appearance of the whole complex.
- Fencing between units F and G is 2.4m in height while the proposed open storage would be 5 metres in height oversailing the fence and create an overbearing structure to the front of the main complex.
- Open storage in front of unit G will have a detrimental impact on this future letting of this unit.
- Application form contained incorrect ownership information.
- The site is owned by Maidstone Council and determination of the application must fall to the Planning Committee.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.01 **Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council:** No comment
- 6.02 **Kent Highways:** No objection as no car parking spaces or access routes will be obstructed.
- 6.03 **Environmental Health:** No objection subject to conditions to secure sound attenuation measures.
- 6.04 **Environment Agency:** No objection

7.0 APPRAISAL

- 7.01 The key issues in this case are considered to be visual amenity and assessment of potential highway and car parking impact.

Visual amenity considerations:

- 7.02 The application site is located on Bircholt Road which forms part of a large industrial estate; Bircholt Road comprises a number of contemporary commercial buildings. The land to the front of nearby buildings is either currently used for the display of motor vehicles for sale, for staff car parking or for turning purposes. In the case of the application site the main existing use of the area to the front of the application building is for parking and manoeuvring.
- 7.03 The building occupying the application site is of a contemporary design and has a functional and utilitarian appearance that reflects its use for industrial and warehousing purposes. The building on the site has a height of 10 metres and a length of 140 metres.
- Provision of storage in the open areas of the site: variation of condition 2.
- 7.04 It is typical for storage to take place within open areas of commercial sites and the storage currently proposed would not normally require planning permission from the local planning authority. In this instance a planning condition was used to introduce a need for permission due to the open nature of the application site frontage. The reason for condition 2 was to safeguard the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 7.05 The large area of storage originally proposed has been reduced in size and broken down into smaller areas that it is considered will reduce the overall impact on the streetscene. The storage areas will also be located a minimum of 20 metres behind the front boundary of the application site. A planning condition is recommended that will restrict the storage to a maximum height of 4 metres. This is considered an appropriate height in the context of the larger application building that will form the backdrop to the storage areas.
- 7.06 Following initial officer concerns, the original proposal has been significantly reduced in scale. It is considered that the revised proposal is acceptable with regards to the site context and is in keeping with the general character of the area. The proposal will have no material impact on the general character of both the site and the surrounding commercial area.

- Provision of a mezzanine floor to unit F3: variation of condition 6.

7.07 The installation of the proposed mezzanine floor will result in a modest increase in operational storage floor space (210 square metres). As there are no external changes proposed, the mezzanine floor is considered acceptable in terms of appearance and visual amenity.

Highway and parking considerations:

- Provision of storage in the open areas of the site: variation of condition 2.

7.08 The approved development included 7 car parking spaces (including 1 space for those with disabilities) in front of unit F2 and 10 car parking spaces (2 spaces) in front of unit F3.

7.09 The existing car parking layout would be reconfigured as part of the proposal, with the new layout allowing provision of two additional parking spaces. The proposed layout provides 13 car parking spaces (including 2 spaces for those with disabilities) in front of unit F2 and 6 car parking spaces (1 space) in front of unit F3.

7.10 The proposed open storage areas do not obstruct the existing delivery access to any commercial unit. It is considered that there is also sufficient space for delivery vehicles to manoeuvre within the retained open areas of the site.

- Provision of a mezzanine floor to unit F3: variation of condition 6.

7.11 Condition 6 sought to control the installation of mezzanine floors to ensure that on site car parking provision would be sufficient to avoid harm to local highway safety. Planning permission is also required generally for mezzanines providing over 200 square metres of new floorspace for retail uses.

7.12 The proposed mezzanine provides an additional 210 square metres of floorspace that the applicant has stated will be used for storage purposes. It is considered that any additional traffic and parking demand generated by the increase in storage floorspace will be minimal and can easily be accommodated on the site and local highway. It is highlighted that the reconfigured car parking area also provides two additional car parking spaces. As such and in the absence of objection to the proposal from Kent Highways the proposal is considered acceptable on highway and parking grounds. A planning condition is recommended that will prevent the mezzanine floor from being used as additional retail trading floorspace.

Other matters:

7.13 Notwithstanding the consultation response from Environmental Health it is not considered that sound attenuation measures are required in relation to the submitted proposal. The application site is in a commercial area with existing elevated background noise levels and any additional noise generated by the storage areas is unlikely to increase these noise levels.

7.14 The current proposal includes the formation of a mezzanine floor to be used for storage within unit F3. The Council are currently considering a separate planning application for the retention of mezzanine floors within unit F1 (390 square metres) and unit F2 (195 square metres) with these areas also used for storage. The acceptability of these other mezzanine floors will be considered separately as part of this second planning application.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The proposal will not result in any material visual harm to the character of the area and will provide sufficient on site car parking and will not harm highway safety. In the absence of objection on highways or parking grounds it is recommended that planning permission is granted for the proposal subject to planning conditions.

RECOMMENDATION – GRANT Subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission;
Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 13-700-011B and 13-700-015B
Reason: To ensure the quality of development is maintained and to prevent harm to amenity.
- (3) Apart from those areas specified on drawing no: 13-700-015 B no open storage shall take place on any part of the application site including in relation to plant, materials, products, goods for sale or hire or waste. The height of the open storage hereby approved shall not exceed 4 metres.
Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- (4) No manufacturing, fabrication or other industrial process shall take place outside the buildings on the site.
Reason: In the interests of amenity and to ensure that the proposed development is integrated with its immediate surroundings.
- (5) The parking, turning, loading, unloading and cycle parking areas as shown on drawing no: 13-700-15 B shall be retained and remain available for such use. No development whether permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order, with or without modification) or not, shall be carried out on the areas indicated or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to them.
Reason: Development without adequate parking/turning provision is likely to lead to parking inconvenient to other road users and in the interests of highway safety.
- (6) Notwithstanding the mezzanine floor hereby permitted no additional floor space shall be created inside the buildings without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: To ensure that the car parking provided continues to meet the needs of the building and in the interests of highway safety.
- (7) The mezzanine floor hereby approved shall only be used for storage purposes and the floorspace should not provide any additional retail trading area that is accessible by customers.
Reason: To ensure that the car parking provided continues to meet the needs of the building and in the interests of highway safety.

NOTE TO APPLICANT: The applicant is advised that in accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Maidstone District Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. Maidstone District

Planning Committee Report

Council works with applicants and agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service; where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome and as appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application. In this instance the applicant was given the opportunity to submit amended plans in order to make the proposal acceptable and the application was approved without delay.

Case Officer: Graham Parkinson

NB: For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website. The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.