

REFERENCE NO - 21/502008/FULL	
APPLICATION PROPOSAL To extend existing terrace and proposed new doors on the South East side of Lockmeadow complex.	
ADDRESS Lockmeadow Leisure Complex Barker Road Maidstone Kent	
RECOMMENDATION Application Permitted subject to conditions	
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION The proposals will considerably enhance the Lockmeadow complex and support the Council's aims to further enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.	
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE The Applicant is Maidstone Borough Council	
WARD Fant	APPLICANT Alexa Kersting-Woods (MBC) AGENT FL.Architects Ltd
TARGET DECISION DATE 16/06/21	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 15/06/21

BACKGROUND

This Planning Application was deferred at the June Committee, with Members resolving that:

consideration of this application be deferred for the submission of a landscaping scheme to soften the impact of the proposed development and provide a biodiversity net gain.

Whilst not recorded in the minutes, Members also requested that the Application be presented in the context of the wider plans for the Lockmeadow site.

Following the deferral, the Leisure Property Manager has discussed various options with relevant parties and an updated landscape scheme has been developed.

To first set the wider site plans in context:

Wider Lockmeadow Aspirations

Since acquiring the site MBC has been committed to enhancing the physical and entertainment offer within the complex, including the range of uses, with a new food court being the most recent initiative. The current proposals are part of this initiative to improve the food offer and are intended to integrate with the wider ambitions for the site.

Such plans are consistent with Policies SP1 and 4 of the Local Plan, together with the NPPF which seek to ensure that town centres provide a wide variety of leisure attractions, reflecting their sustainable location and accessibility.

The Council's Strategic Plan also seeks to ensure that we deliver a sustainable and vibrant leisure offer.

The recently published draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) has as one of its priorities:

'Destination Maidstone town centre - Re-imagining Maidstone's town centre as a vibrant, mixed-use destination with a thriving day and night time economy befitting a modern county town'. The EDS's Action Plan seeks, as

a short-term objective, to re-purpose the town centre as a cultural and leisure hub.

As well as the changes to the leisure offer, the upgrading of the overall complex is a key part of the capital programme. Members will be aware that the landscaping at the front of the site has already been enhanced and that the building's exterior has been upgraded.

As part of these early phase works, for example, bird boxes and a bug hotel are being installed as part of a woodland trail leading people to the play area.

The relationship of the site to the river is a key element of its offer and the Lockmeadow team wish to maximise the riverside location by investing in the play area and increased outside seating. The wider site has been greatly improved with landscaping, taking out unnecessary structures and removing unsightly fencing.

The open space to the rear of the site contains the 'town square'. The plans for this space are evolving, but it is planned that this area will become the location for a variety of arts and culture events. It is planned that the extended terrace seating, the town square and the planned nature play area will become an integrated family orientated offer.

A copy of the recent consultation brochure for the play area is attached as Appendix 2. This illustrates that the play area will have a strong nature / landscape theme, for example:



Updated Landscaping Scheme

Whilst the Town Square plans are being developed, the Council wishes to keep the space flexible and open, as such permanent features in the space are not desirable, although as illustrated with the planned play area, landscaping will be a key feature of the future space.

In addition, the visual interaction with the River is a key element of the outdoor offer and so the Council does not wish to sever the link with a dense planting screen.

In the interim it is therefore proposed to install 4 large planters in the town square. In addition to amenity value, each planter will provide biodiversity benefits sources of shelter and food for birds and invertebrates. The selected species have a likelihood of survival in tough conditions and potential for transplant into a more permanent future landscaping scheme.

Tree species per box :

- Multi-stemmed Birch , *Betula pendula* -planted at 1.2-1.5m tall
- Multi-stemmed Hazel – *Corylus avellana* planted at 1.2-1.5 m tall
- Crab apple cultivars (*Malus sp.*)

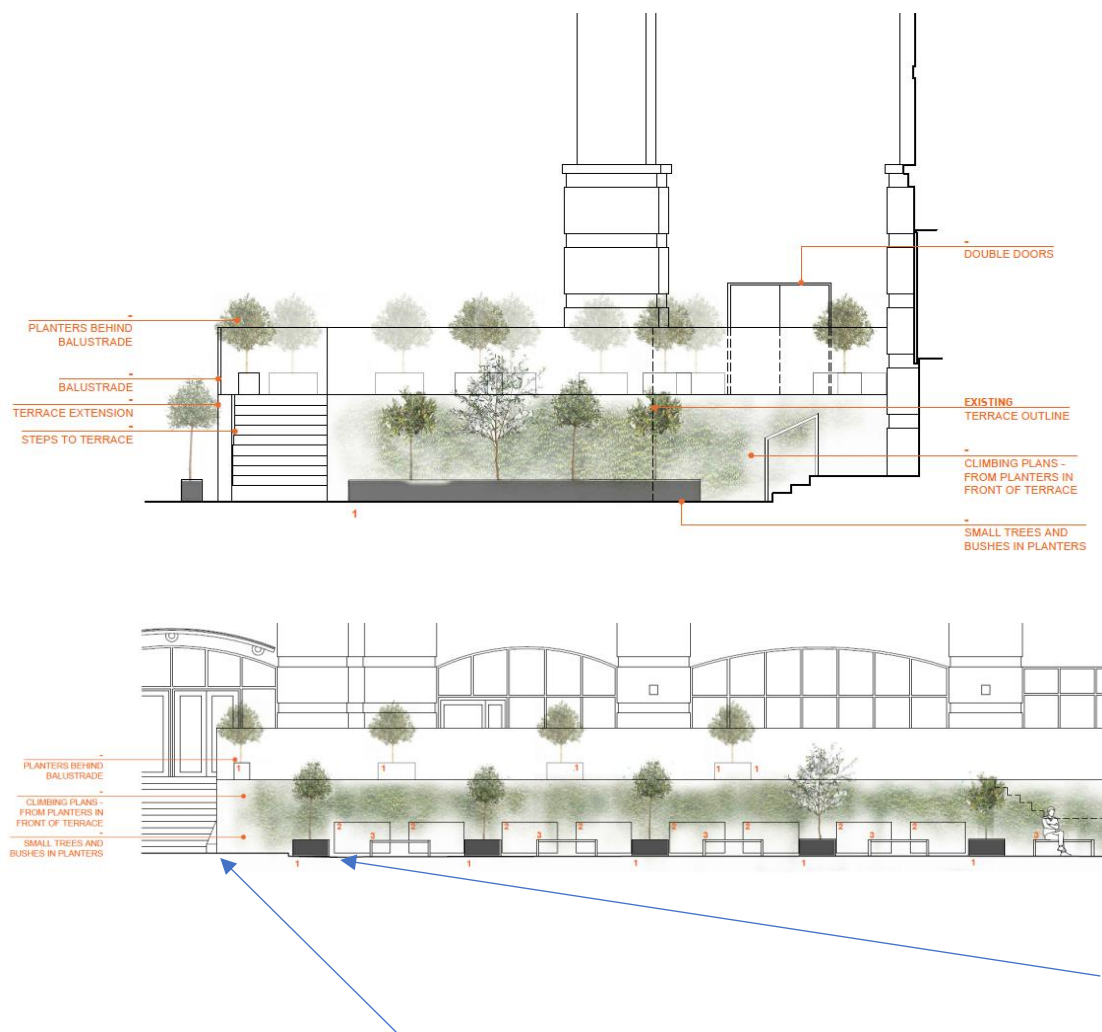
Shrubby species:

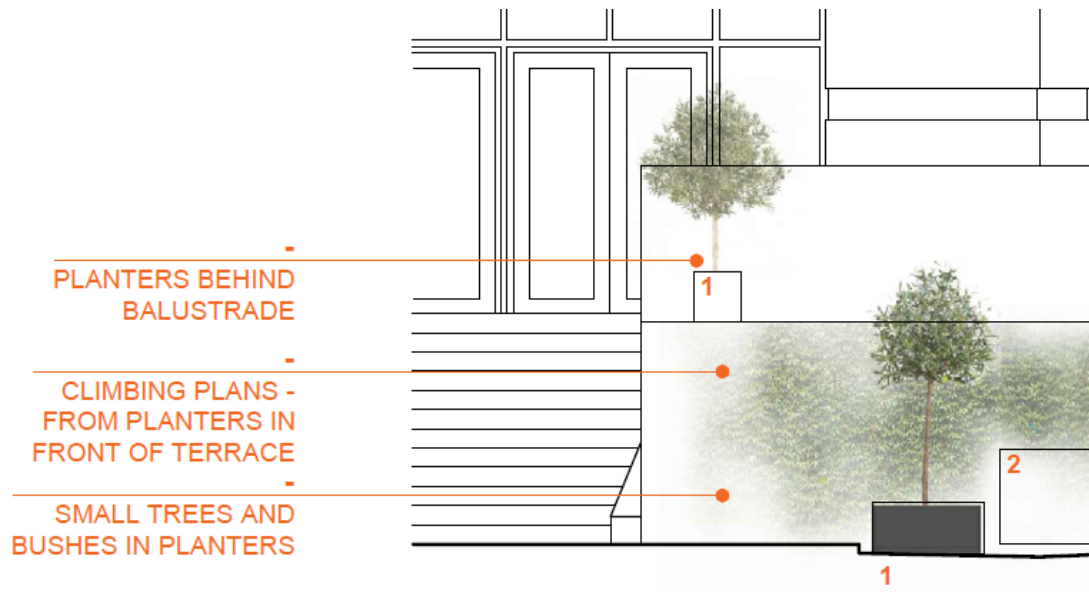
- Guelder rose - *Viburnum opulus* - planted at 90-1.2m
- Common Dogwood – *Cornus sanguinea* - planted at 60-80 cm

Underplanted with:

- Ivy , *Hedera helix*
- Wild majoram , *Origanum vulgare*
- Butcher's broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*)

In addition, planters of a similar style to those at the front of the site will be installed, with climbers on the rear and side plinth to the terrace.





CONCLUSION

It is considered that the landscaping details will greatly enhance the appearance of the terrace and not adversely affect the setting of the river or longer distance views towards the site. The scheme will enhance biodiversity opportunity and will add to the habitat features already being implemented across the wider site.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

Due regard has been had to the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It is considered that the application proposals would not undermine objectives of the Duty.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission 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:

Drawing No. 316(GA)001 Rev 2 – Site Location and Block Plans

Drawing No. 316(GA)021 Rev 4 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No. 316(GA)027 Rev 2 – Proposed Elevation

Drawing No. 316(GA)028 Rev 3 – Proposed Elevation

Updated Planting Details Received 6th July 2021

Reason: To clarify which plans have been approved.

3. The materials to be used in the development hereby approved shall be as indicated on the approved plans unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.

4. The terrace hereby permitted shall not be used outside the hours of 09:00 to 23:00 on any day.

Reason: To safeguard the enjoyment of their properties by residential occupiers.

5. No musical equipment and/or electrically amplified sound shall be so installed, maintained and operated on the terracing hereby permitted so as to prevent the transmission of noise and/or vibration to any adjacent premises;

Reason: To safeguard the enjoyment of their properties by adjoining residential occupiers.

Officer: Austin Mackie