

REPORT SUMMARY

REFERENCE NUMBER: 23/504980/FULL		
APPLICATION PROPOSAL: Change of use of the existing building from use as offices and research and development (Use Class E(g) (i) and (ii)) to use as offices, research and development, and medical services (Use Class E(g) (i) and (ii), and Use Class E(e)).		
ADDRESS: Maidstone Innovation Centre Gidds Pond Way Weaving Kent ME14 5FY		
RECOMMENDATION: GRANT- subject to planning Conditions set out in Section 8.0 of Report		
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: For the reasons set out below it is considered that the proposed change of use of the Innovation Centre building- to include 'medical or health services' would be acceptable as it is consistent with the site allocation set out in Policy RMX1(1). The proposals would not cause any harm to residential amenity or highway safety. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan.		
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE: This application was submitted by Maidstone Borough Council.		
WARD: Boxley	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL: Boxley	APPLICANT: Maidstone Borough Council AGENT: WSP UK Ltd
CASE OFFICER: Sam Cowdry	VALIDATION DATE: 23/11/23	DECISION DUE DATE: 22/02/24
ADVERTISED AS A DEPARTURE: No		

Relevant Planning History

16/507292/OUT

Outline Application with access matters sought for development of medical campus comprising up to 92,379 m² of additional floorspace (including additional hospital facilities, clinics, consultation rooms and a rehabilitation centre (classes C2/D1); education and training facilities with residential accommodation (class C2/D1); keyworker accommodation for nurses and doctors (class C3); pathology laboratories (class B1); business uses (class B1); ancillary retail services (class A1, A2, A3); and up to 116 bed class C2 neuro-rehabilitation accommodation; internal roads and car parks, including car park for residents of Gidds Pond Cottages; hard and soft landscaping including creation of a nature reserve (to renew existing consent 13/1163).

Approved 16.06.2017

18/506658/REM

Reserved Matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline application 16/507292/OUT (outline application with access sought for development of medical campus) for construction of proposed four storey Innovation Centre office building (Class B1) and associated external works.

Approved 17.04.2019

23/503883/PAMEET

Pre-Application Phone or Office Meeting - Planning Officer + Senior Planning Officer + Head of Service - The proposals seek to expand the approved uses within the existing building to facilitate to occupation of part of the first floor of the building as a visitor health service, specifically providing consultation space.

MAIN REPORT

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 Maidstone Innovation Centre is located on the corner plot abutting both Newnham Court Way and Gidds Pond Way, within Maidstone's urban boundary.
- 1.02 The application site is located within Newnham Park, a larger site allocation designated to medical and associated uses. An outline permission for such uses exists and under which the Innovation Centre was built. Within the wider site is the KIMs Hospital, Cygnet Hospital, and a care home. The application site forms part of a growth area, which aims to create a specialist knowledge cluster to attract skilled workers.
- 1.03 The building itself is 4 storeys', which provide 3561 sqm floorspace and possesses a use as offices and research and development space (Use Class E(g) (i) and (ii)).

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The proposal is for a change of use of the existing building from use as offices and research and development to also include 'medical services' Use Class E(e). Currently, if a chiropodist or physiotherapist, as examples, wish to rent space, they cannot unless these are used as offices or research and development as opposed to health/medical support. However, all uses on the entire campus have to be 'medically related' but for the Innovation Centre the uses have to be both i.e medically related AND office/R & D. This was the applicant's chosen approach with regard to the original application.
- 2.02 Planning permission is required, as whilst uses now falling under Class E (such as offices and research and development) can switch between a variety of uses including 'medical or health services', condition 37 (associated with wider outline permission 16/507292/OUT) restricts the use of the building to offices and research and development only. The medical uses would likely involve serving of patients and would cover a variety of functions such as preventative, rehabilitative, long-term and diagnostic care. This care would be delivered by healthcare professionals.
- 2.03 The building is currently 54% occupied, although could rise to potentially 65% with demand from the health services businesses wishing to take up occupancy.

3. POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017

- SS1- Maidstone Borough Spatial Strategy
- SP1- Maidstone Urban Area
- RMX1
- RMX1(1) – Newnham Park, Bearsted Road, Maidstone
- DM1 – Principles of Good Design

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Supplementary Planning Documents: N/A

The Regulation 22 Local Plan Review (LPR) submission comprises the draft plan for submission (Regulation 19) dated October 2021, the representations and proposed main modifications. It is therefore a material consideration and attracts some weight. The LPR has been through Stage 1 and 2 Hearings and the main modifications the Inspector considers are required to make it sound have been out to public consultation so it is at an advanced stage. However, responses to the consultation need to be considered by the Inspector along with him producing his Final Report so the LPR as a whole is considered to attract moderate weight at the current time

4. LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

Local Residents:

- 4.01 No comments received

5. CONSULTATIONS

Boxley Parish Council

- 5.01 Boxley Parish Council have no material planning reasons to object to this application.

6. APPRAISAL

- 6.01 The key issues are:

- Site Allocation
- Residential amenity
- Parking/ Highway Safety
- Other Matters

Principle of Development/ Policy Context/ Background

- 6.02 Maidstone Innovation Centre is located within Newnham Park, which is allocated for a medical campus of up to 100,000m², as per Policy RMX1 (1). Part 1 of the policy states the following:

"Phased provision of a maximum of 100,000m² of specialist medical facilities set within an enhanced landscape structure of which 25,000m² will provide for associated offices and research and development."

- 6.03 *This extent of floorspace allocated to medical use is also supported by Policy SP1 and SS1.*
- 6.04 Paragraph 4.206 of the Local Plan states that the appropriate uses on the site will include hospital and healthcare facilities, specialist rehabilitation services, medical related research and development, central laboratory facilities and medical training.
- 6.05 Within the preamble for policy SP21, paragraph 4.141 highlights that this site is a particular opportunity to create a hub for medical related businesses, to attract high level, knowledge intensive employment and business to contribute to the local economy.
- 6.06 Under the draft Local Plan Review the allocation is in effect rolled forward and remains in place with no changes.

- 6.07 It is considered that incorporation of medical or health services would be in accordance with the site allocation set forth within RMX1(1) of the Local Plan as the allocation permits hospital or healthcare facilities. This use is therefore consistent with the wider use and objectives of the Newnham Park site, and so does not deviate from the uses deemed acceptable by the site allocation.
- 6.08 Moreover, the Innovation Centre is not functionally related to the KIMS Hospital but functions independently and this has always been the case. Therefore, there is no planning reason to prevent healthcare services operating from the Innovation Centre. This complies with the general policy for this 'campus'.
- 6.09 There remains a need for a condition to restrict the office and research and development uses to those directly associated with the life science, health care and medical service sectors as per the existing permission. This ensures that these uses of the building would not be for general business use and remains consistent with Policy RMX1(1).

Highways

- 6.10 Policy DM1 outlines that planning proposals should "*Safely accommodate the vehicular and pedestrian movement generated by the proposal on the local highway network and through the site access*"
- 6.11 The applicant considers that the inclusion of medical uses within this building would not generate further traffic movements beyond the permitted use. Whilst the frequency of trips may increase due to increased visitation associated with the medical and health services, it is considered on balance that this would not be of such a level or have any significant impact in the context of the scale of the development permitted under the wider outline consent.

Other Matters

- 6.12 It is not considered that there will be any significant impact upon residential amenity which would be extensively dissimilar in terms of the use of the existing building or the overall 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.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.01 In conclusion, it is considered that the proposal to include 'medical or health uses' conforms with the allocation associated with the wider site in that it would align with uses expected within a medical campus. The proposal would not harm amenity on site, nor would it significantly alter the existing transport situation. The proposal would not be unacceptable in terms of any other material planning considerations. As such, the proposed change of use is considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions

with delegated powers to the Head of Planning and Development to be able to settle or amend any necessary planning conditions and/or informative in line with the matters set out in the recommendation and as resolved by the Planning Committee:

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:

Site Location

Drawing No. KMCIC-BBA-00-01-DR-A-2001 (Existing First Floor GA Plan)
Drawing No. KMCIC-BBA-00-02-DR-A-2001 (Existing Second Floor GA Plan)
Drawing No. KMCIC-BBA-00-03-DR-A-2001 (Existing Third Floor GA Plan)
Drawing No. KMCIC-BBA-00-GF-DR-A-2001 (Existing Ground Floor GA Plan)
Drawing No. KMCIC-BBA-00-RF-DR-A-2001 (Existing Roof GA Plan)

all received 16.11.2023

Reason: To clarify which plans have been approved.

3. The building shall only be used for Use Classes E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) and E(e) and for no other purpose, including any other purpose in Class E of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or permitted under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) or any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting those Orders with or without modification. The occupation of the building for Use Classes E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) shall be limited only to those occupiers directly associated with the life science, health care and medical service sectors.

Reason: To ensure the development remains a medical based development in accordance with draft policy RMX1(1) of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017.