

REFERENCE NO: 23/501579/FULL		
APPLICATION PROPOSAL: Change of use of former telephone exchange (Sui Generis) to an office (Class E(g)), including erection of a single storey side extension (resubmission of 22/505768/FULL).		
ADDRESS: Former telephone exchange, Ashford Road, Hollingbourne, Kent		
RECOMMENDATION: GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the planning conditions set out in Section 5 of this report.		
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal is acceptable in relation to the minimal level of harm that will be caused to the character and appearance of this rural area. • The proposal is acceptable in relation to heritage impacts, neighbour amenity, and biodiversity. • The access and parking arrangements revised from previous applications following comments from KCC Highways are acceptable. 		
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The officer recommendation is contrary to the views of Hollingbourne Parish Council. 		
WARD North Downs	PARISH Hollingbourne	COUNCIL APPLICANT: Mrs Anna Al-Shawi AGENT Lusher Architects
CASE OFFICER: Tony Ryan	VALIDATION DATE: 19/04/23	DECISION DUE DATE: 29/07/2023
ADVERTISED AS A DEPARTURE: No		

1. BACKGROUND

1.01 This application was first considered by members at the planning committee meeting on the 20 July 2023. The committee report to this meeting is provided as an appendix to this report. The committee resolved to defer a decision for the following single reason:

(a) to check whether vegetation would have to be removed to achieve the required visibility splays and if removal is required to what extent.

1.02 In addition to the deferral reason, members also expressed concerns at the first meeting in relation to the following:

(b) Construction management.

(c) Landscaping and visual impact.

(d) Biodiversity net gain.

(e) On site sustainability.

(f) Traffic assessment – comparison data from ‘edge of centre’ locations.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The application is for the change of use from telephone exchange (Use Class Sui Generis) to an office use (planning use class E(g)). With a single storey side extension, the building GIA will be increased to 15 square metres.
- 2.02 With reference to the planning history planning applications 18/501322/FULL and 18/504363/FULL (dismissed appeal) involved conversion of the application building to residential use. Planning permission was refused for residential use on two grounds, firstly that the applicant had not demonstrated that the building could not accommodate a business use and secondly highway safety issues. No parish council or third-party objection to these applications.
- 2.03 Application 22/505768/FULL involved conversion of the building to an alternative business use. Planning permission was refused for a single highway safety ground (objection from KCC Highways) as the applicant had failed to demonstrate that safe vehicle access could be provided. Parish council objected on highway safety grounds.
- 2.04 The current application includes a supporting transport note. This transport note provides all the information that KCC Highways required to assess the highways impact of the development. KCC Highways have no objection to the current application.

3. APPRAISAL

- 3.01 This report seeks to address the reason for deferral (a) as set out in the committee minutes. In addition, the report provides further information on other areas of concern ((b) to (f)) that were expressed by members during the discussion at the committee on the 20 July 2023. These areas of concern are listed above at paragraph 1.03 and considered in turn below.

(a) Reason for deferral – whether vegetation would have to be removed to achieve visibility splays and if removal is required to what extent.

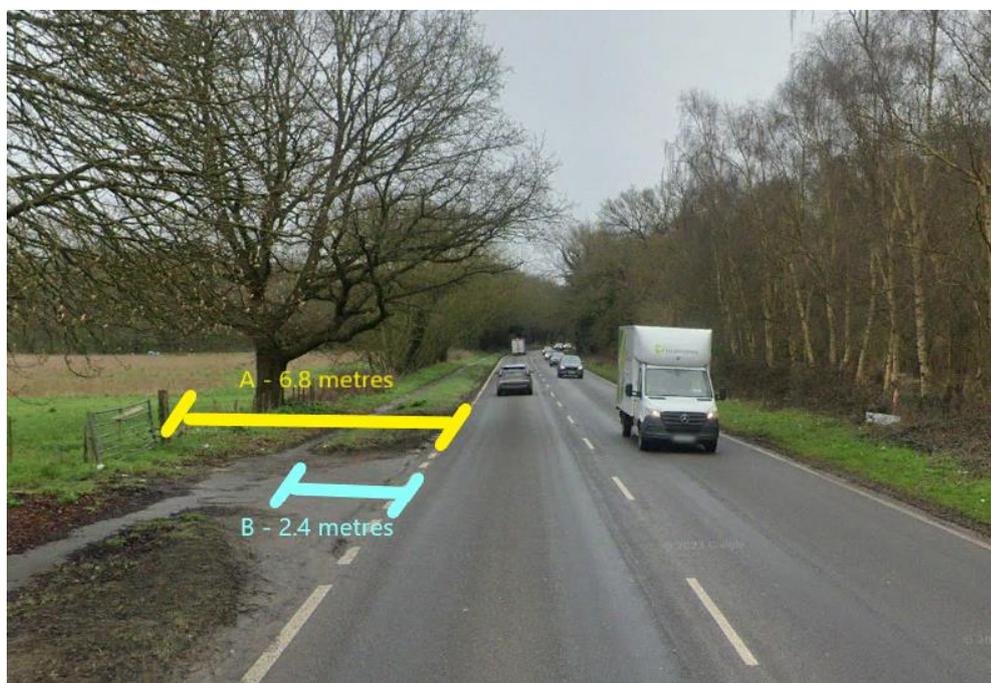
- 3.02 No existing vegetation would need to be removed to provide the required driver visibility splays.
- 3.03 The applicant has provided a plan that shows that visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m provided on land controlled by the highway authority.
- 3.04 The front boundary of the application site and adjoining land along Ashford Road are set back from the edge of the carriageway. Even when accounting for the tree outside the application site, there is still double the required set back to achieve the necessary sightline distance of 2.4 metres.
- 3.05 This section of Ashford Road is straight. The straight road and the consistent substantial and generally consistent set back of front boundaries from the carriageway will provide good visibility in both directions for drivers using the access. The submitted information demonstrates that the visibility splay of the required distance of 215 metres can be provided without the need to remove vegetation.
- 3.06 The images on the following page look firstly west and then east from the application site frontage. The images show the set back of front boundaries from the Ashford Road carriageway and the location of the tree outside the application site that is also set back.

Fig 1: View looking west along Ashford Road towards Hollingbourne



- 6.8 metres (distance A) separates the front boundary of the application site from the edge of the carriageway in Ashford Road.
- 5 metres (distance B) separates the existing tree outside the application site from the edge of the carriageway in Ashford Road.
- To achieve the necessary driver visibility splay, a clear space of 2.4 metres (distance C) back from the edge of the carriageway is required.

Fig 2: View looking east along Ashford Road towards Lenham



- 6.8 metres (distance A) separates the front boundary of the application site from the edge of the carriageway in Ashford Road.
- To achieve the necessary driver visibility splay, a clear space of 2.4 metres (distance B) back from the edge of the carriageway is required.

(b)Construction management.

- 3.07 Concerns were expressed by members in relation to potential highway safety issues during the construction of the building extension.
- 3.08 In response to members concerns, the applicant has submitted a construction traffic management plan as part of the application (commonly submitted post decision through a planning condition). A copy of the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan is included as an appendix with a summary of its contents below:
- 3.09 Details of the Construction Project Manager role
- An appointed Construction Project Manager will be responsible for
 - implementing measures in this Construction Traffic Management Plan.
 - managing the safe and efficient movement of vehicles to the site (daily average of three vehicles per day, maximum of five/six).
 - dealing with any concerns of residents and businesses.
 - Waste management and reduction.
 - liaison with the planning authority where necessary.
- 3.10 Traffic management
- Prior to any works commencing temporary signage will inform drivers coming from both directions in Ashford Road of construction traffic.
 - All construction deliveries and loading will take place on site and all materials will be stored on site.
 - A banksman will be present to support vehicles reversing into the existing site access.
 - The CPM will ensure that no vehicles associated with the development are permitted to stop or wait on the public highway, nor cause any obstruction to neighbouring properties that would impede pedestrian or vehicle access/egress to those properties.
- 3.11 Construction vehicles and delivery management
- Deliveries will be pre-booked and allocated set arrival times.
 - Deliveries will take place outside the network and school peak hours.
 - Arrangements will seek to avoid more than one vehicle arriving and departing at any one time.
 - Only one vehicle parked on site at any one time.
 - All contractors, delivery companies and visitors to the site made aware of the access and egress route and of the parking restrictions in the vicinity of the site prior to undertaking their journey.
 - A written briefing and plan for the site will be provided to contractors, delivery companies and visitors.
- 3.12 Vehicle routing and staff parking
- Construction vehicles will route to and from the site from Ashford Road (A20) from the north, which offers direct connections to the M20.
 - Submitted plan demonstrates that staff parking (4 vehicles) can be provided on site whilst also providing space for HGVs to unload.
 - Staff will be encouraged to car-share where possible.
- 3.13 Nuisance Control and security
- Every effort will be made to avoid waste,
 - All waste stored on site and dealt with in accordance with the duty of care Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991.
 - Where hazardous waste is identified, it will be controlled and disposed of following the Environment Agency approved procedures.

- No HGV movements to or from the site between the hours of 08:00 and 09:00am and 17:00 and 18:00pm.
- All vehicles accessing the site will be inspected and wheels cleaned before leaving the site to the public highway. In event that mud is spread on the public highway this will be cleaned using a road sweeper.
- All materials will be stored on site within a secure area. The Construction Project Manager will be responsible for site security and emergency procedures.

3.14 Consultation

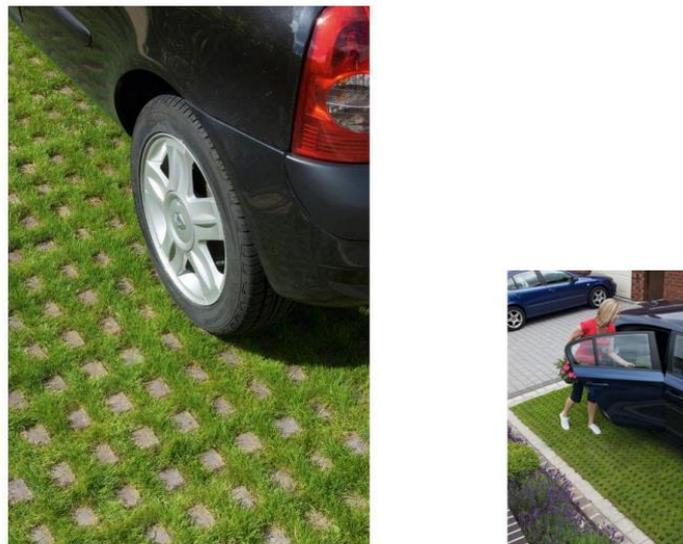
- The Construction Project Manager will liaise with immediate neighbours and businesses so that they are aware of the construction works giving the opportunity to raise issues.

(c) Landscaping and visual impact.

3.15 Members raised concerns regarding the visual impact of the building extension and changes to the open areas of the site. In response to these concerns the applicant has made the following changes:

- Pedestrian path changed from hard paving to pebbles.
- Landscape screening introduced to side and rear boundaries.
- Parking and circulation areas reduced.
- Surface of retained parking and circulation areas changed to use 'grasscrete' (similar surface used in Leeds Castle car parks with visual example below).

Fig 3: Indicative example of 'grasscrete' surface



- All vehicles accessing the site will be inspected and wheels cleaned before leaving the site to the public highway. In event that mud is spread on the public highway this will be cleaned using a road sweeper.
- All materials will be stored on site within a secure area. The Construction Project Manager will be responsible for site security and emergency procedures.

(d) Biodiversity net gain.

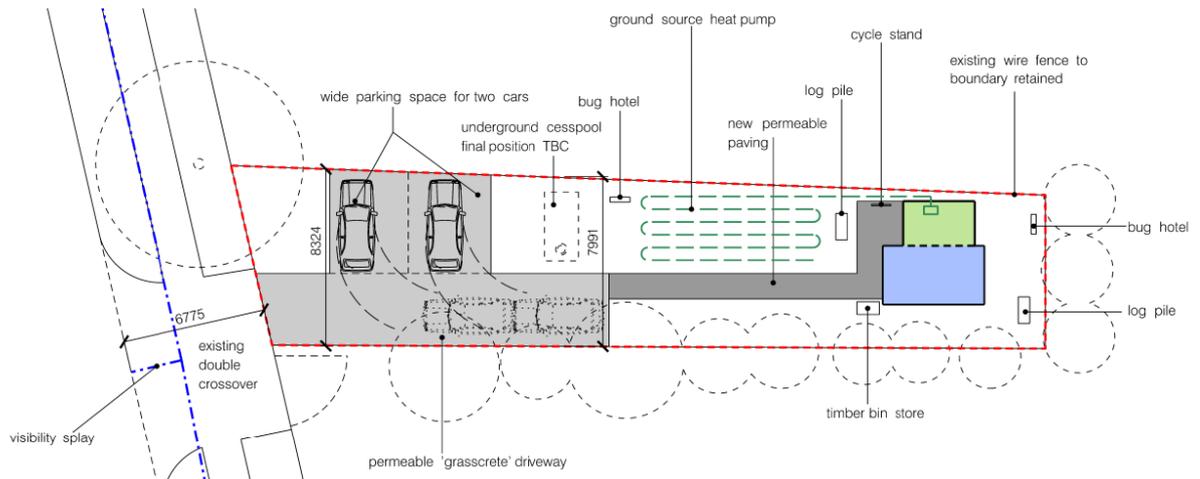
3.16 The applicant has submitted details of bird and bat boxes integral to the construction of the proposed extension and their location on the building.

3.17 In addition to the new boundary hedging, the submitted details also now include provision of bug hotels and log piles in the open areas of the site. The location of the log piles and the bug hotel is shown on the drawing below.

(e) On site sustainability.

- 3.18 Members queried the sustainability of the retained building structure. The applicant has in response confirmed that the new and existing structure will be internally lined with 80mm insulation with 100mm to ceiling to improve thermal performance.
- 3.19 In relation to renewable energy, a ground source heat pump is proposed. This ground source heat pump located below ground and within the building will not have any visual impact. The location of the below ground element of the ground source heat pump is shown in the drawing extract below.

Fig 4: Location of ground source heat pump, bug hotel and log piles.



(f) Traffic assessment – comparison data from ‘edge of centre’ locations.

- 3.20 The applicant’s transport consultant has confirmed that when assessing the total number of trips generated by a use, it is the nature of the business that is important and not the location. This is because it is the nature of the business that dictates the number and nature of servicing trips, and these trips are unlikely to vary from one location to another.
- 3.21 In the context of the above background, the submitted information relating to ‘edge of centre’ locations is accurate and relevant to the assessment of the current planning application.
- 3.22 Due to the minimal number of servicing trips, and the short period of time for which servicing vehicles would remain at the site, service vehicles visiting the site can pull over within the site’s crossover without impacting on the function or safety of the local highway network.
- 3.23 The NPPF states “Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe (Paragraph 111)”.
- 3.24 The access and is suitable for the proposed use and the trips associated with the use can be safely accommodated on the road network. There has been no objection raised by KCC Highways. It is concluded that the impact of the application on highway safety will be acceptable and the impact on the road network will not be ‘severe’. The impact of the proposal is found to be acceptable.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 3.25 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.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.01 The proposal is acceptable in relation to the minimal level of harm that will be caused to the character and appearance of this rural area. The proposal is acceptable in relation to heritage impacts, neighbour amenity, and biodiversity. The access and parking arrangements are acceptable.
- 4.02 The application brings a vacant building back into beneficial use and supports the aims of NPPF and the Local Plan in achieving a prosperous rural economy.

5. 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 in line with the matters set out in the recommendation and as resolved by the Planning Committee.

- 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 approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
- 001. P01 Site Location Plan
 - 002. P01 Existing Block Plan
 - 010. P01 Existing Ground Floor and Roof Plans
 - 020. P01 Existing Front and Side Elevations
 - 021. P01 Existing Rear and Side Elevations
 - 102. P03 Proposed Block Plan (07.09.2023)
 - 110. P02 Proposed Ground Floor and Roof Plans (07.09.2023)
 - 120. P02 Proposed Front and Side Elevations (07.09.2023)
 - 121. P01 Proposed Rear and Side Elevations
 - 200. P01 Landscape Plan (07.09.2023)
 - Supporting documents – Building Condition Survey and Summary Report
 - Supporting documents - Design and Access Statement
 - Supporting documents - Material Schedule (07.09.2023)
 - Supporting documents - 'Motion' Highways Technical Note (revised 17.08.23)
 - Supporting documents – Construction Traffic Management Plan (07.09.2023)
- Reason: in the interests of proper planning.
- 3) The external facing materials to be used in the development hereby approved shall be as indicated in the submitted Design and Access Statement as revised by the submitted 'Material Schedule'. Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.
- 4) The measures taken for the onsite enhancement of biodiversity as shown in the submitted drawings 120. P02 Proposed Front and Side Elevations (07.09.2023), 102. P03 Proposed Block Plan (07.09.2023) and Material Schedule (07.09.2023) shall be in place prior to first occupation of the approved building. All features shall be maintained permanently thereafter. Reason: To enhance ecology and biodiversity on the site

in line with the requirement to achieve a net biodiversity gain from all development.

- 5) The extension hereby approved shall not commence above slab level until a hard and soft landscape scheme designed in accordance with the principles of the Council's landscape character guidance (Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment Supplement 2012) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall
 - (a) provide details of on-site planting in a planting specification including plant species, plant spacing, quantities, and maturity (non-plastic guards shall be used for the new trees and hedgerows, and no Sycamore trees shall be planted).
 - (b) provide landscape implementation details and timetable
 - (d) provide a [5] year landscape management planReason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.
- 6) All planting, seeding, and turfing specified in the approved landscape details shall be completed by the end of the first planting season (October to February) following first occupation of the approved building. Any seeding or turfing which fails to establish or any trees or plants which, within five years from the first occupation of a property, die, are removed or become so seriously damaged or diseased that their long term amenity value has been adversely affected shall be replaced in the next planting season with plants of the same species and size as detailed in the approved landscape scheme. Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact, and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.
- 7) The building or land shall be used for office purposes only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Classes of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 or permitted under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 or any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting those Orders with or without modification). Reason: Unrestricted use of the building or land could cause demonstrable harm to the character, appearance and functioning of the surrounding area and/or the enjoyment of their properties by adjoining residential occupiers.
- 8) Driver visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m with no obstruction over 1.0m above ground level shall be provided in accordance with Location Plan and shall be subsequently maintained for the lifetime of the development. Reason: In the interests of highway safety.
- 9) The approved parking areas shall be retained and shall be kept available for such use. Reason: Development without adequate parking/turning provision is likely to lead to parking inconvenient to other road users and in the interests of road safety.
- 10) Any external lighting installed on the site (whether permanent or temporary) shall be in accordance with details that have previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall be in accordance with the Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting, GN01, dated 2011 (and any subsequent revisions) and follow the recommendations within Bat Conservation Trust's 'Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting', and shall include a layout plan with beam orientation and a schedule of light equipment proposed (luminaire type; mounting height; aiming angles and luminaire profiles) and an ISO lux plan showing light spill. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance

with the subsequently approved details and maintained as such thereafter.
Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside and in the interests of residential amenity and wildlife.

- 11) Prior to the occupation of the approved building the bicycle parking shown on drawing 102. P03 Proposed Block Plan (07.09.2023) and Material Schedule (07.09.2023) shall be in place. These details will be maintained as such thereafter. Reason: To promote sustainable travel choices and the reduction of CO2 emissions.
- 12) The construction works shall only proceed in accordance with the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan.
Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and highway safety