

Item 16: Maidstone Borough Local Plan – mixed use allocations

An email has been received from the Chief Executive of Gallagher Properties Ltd in respect of Eclipse Business Park.

"We write briefly in respect to the proposals before you this evening on mixed use development (item 16 on agenda) and specifically concerning Eclipse Park.

Eclipse Park is already mixed use (office, retail and hotel) and we have made representations to the Local Plan consultations advising that we see the future development of Eclipse Park to be a continuance of this mix.

Such a vision is in keeping with the market and occupier demand. Demand for larger office developments is virtually nil, replaced by a need for smaller office suites available on shorter, flexible terms. Institutional funding for the smaller flexible units is not available due to uncertainty of income and so would need to be alternatively funded.

With regard to retail we recognise that the Council seeks to promote and protect the town centre however there will be some retail that just will not go into the town centre (the NEXT Home & Fashion store being an example). In such circumstances Maidstone will have the choice of edge / out of town or not at all. The NEXT store has been a positive addition to the Maidstone economy and some additional retail of similar quality should not be excluded from our collective thinking, subject to the same sequential and impact test proposed for additional food retailing at Newnham Court (see Officers response to Newnham Court Appendix One).

We would like to emphasise that whatever the use, all future development at Eclipse Park will be of high quality using attractive materials and well designed, befitting a quality, mixed use, destination.

We recognise that the park and ride situation needs to be resolved and have made separate representations on how that could happen.

Eclipse Park is strategically very well positioned and the main infrastructure is in place so it is readily delivered. It is already providing high levels of employment and the remaining development can provide further employment across a wide range of occupations providing planning policies and planning decisions are in keeping with investor / occupier needs and requirements.

We would therefore ask that the Council consider Eclipse Park as a mixed use development in the fashion outlined above."

The appropriate land uses for Eclipse Park are discussed in the report.