

APPLICATION: MA/09/2185 Date: 23 November 2009 Received: 12 February 2010
APPLICANT: Revelan Group Plc
LOCATION: MARTIN HOUSE, BOXMEND INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BIRCHOLT ROAD,
MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME15 9YG
PARISH: Boughton Monchelsea
PROPOSAL: Change of use to B1, B2 or B8 uses as shown on A4 site location
plan received on 30th November 2009 and email received on 12th
February 2010.
AGENDA DATE: 18th March 2010
CASE OFFICER: Richard Timms

The recommendation for this application is being reported to Committee for decision because:

- The Council has an interest in the application being the owner of the land

1. POLICIES

Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000: ED2, ED9
The South East Plan 2009: CC1, RE1, RE3
Government Policy: PPS1, PPS4

1. HISTORY

MA/98/0031 Change of use to storage and distribution (B8) – APPROVED WITH
CONDITIONS

MA/97/1160 Extension to and installation of mezzanine floor to warehouse unit with
offices– APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

MA/79/2162 New single storey industrial unit containing two storey offices –
APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

MA/77/1152 New building for the distribution of garden machinery, repairs and
servicing – APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

MA/77/0515 Building for repair and distribution of agricultural machinery – APPROVED
WITH CONDITIONS

2. CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 **Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council:** Do not wish to object/comment.
- 3.2 **Kent Highway Services:** No objections
- 3.3 **Environmental Health Manager:** No objections.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Site & Setting

- 4.1.1 This is an application for the change of use of Martin House to B1 and/or B2 and/or B8 uses. The application site is within the Parkwood Industrial Estate which falls within the parish of Boughton Monchelsea. The estate is designated for B1 (offices and light industry) and B2 (general industry) uses under policy ED2 of the Local Plan or car sales and showrooms under policy R18. The site is within the defined urban settlement boundary of Maidstone.
- 4.1.2 The application site relates to a two storey industrial building of typical construction being brickwork at ground floor and blue steel above, and its curtilage at the southern end of the estate on the east side of Bircholt Road. The building is currently vacant and has its staff and customer frontage to Bircholt Road on the west side with the service entrance to the rear, east via an access off Bircholt Road. There are 30 car parking spaces to the north of the building either side of the access road. The site is surrounded by other similar industrial buildings within the estate.
- 4.1.3 The building has some 1070m² of floorspace on the ground floor and 144m² provided by a mezzanine floor on the first floor (total of 1214m²).

4.2 Proposed Development

- 4.2.1 The application proposes a change of use to B1 (offices and light industry), B2 (general industry) or B8 (storage and distribution) uses. The application is seeking a flexible use of either a mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses, or solely a B1, B2 or B8 use. It is essentially a speculative application and no internal or external changes to the building are proposed.

4.3 Principle of Development & Assessment

- 4.3.1 Recent government advice (29th December 2009) is contained within PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. This outlines that Local Planning Authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards applications for economic development with applications that secure sustainable economic growth treated favourably.
- 4.3.2 The South East Plan 2009, under policies RE1 and RE3 essentially outlines that Local Planning Authorities should facilitate a flexible supply of land to meet the varying needs of the economic sectors and give regard to strategic and local business needs.
- 4.3.3 Policy ED2 of the Local Plan designates the Parkwood Industrial Estate for B1 and B2 uses, so I consider this element of the proposals to be acceptable whether being solely used for one of these uses, or a mixture of both.
- 4.3.4 The proposed B8 use would not strictly accord with the designation for the industrial estate under this policy. However, policy ED9 relates to B8 uses and allows these to be located at sites designated for B2 uses such as the Parkwood Industrial Estate, provided the use supports existing manufacturing or commercial operations and is well related to the primary road network. This policy to my mind is seeking to prevent major distributors taking up designated employment sites as they can provide less benefit to local businesses and take up large amounts of space with lower staff numbers. In the case of Martin House, I consider that the layout of the building, with its relatively restricted rear HGV access, does not lend itself to a major bulk distributor so it is most likely that any B8 use would support existing manufacturing and commercial operations in the area. On this basis, I consider a B8 use would be acceptable in the industrial estate, which I consider to be well related to the primary road network. Clearly, all the proposed 'B' uses would provide for employment in accordance with the objectives of designated the estate for economic development.

4.4 Other Matters

- 4.4.1 In terms of parking provision and highway safety, there are 30 car parking spaces and loading areas to the rear of the building. There are no current local parking standards but I consider 30 spaces to be acceptable for any of the proposed uses. The site is accessible by public transport and I do not consider there would be any highway safety issues as a result of any of the proposed uses. I note that Kent Highway Services have raised no objections.

4.4.2 There are no nearby residential properties so there are no implications for residential amenity and on this basis I consider there to be no reason to limit the hours of use. I also note that hours have not been previously restricted on the property. The site benefits from a landscaped area to its front (the main public view point) with hedging, grassed areas, shrubs and trees, so I do not consider any further landscaping is necessary.

4.5 Conclusion

4.5.1 The proposed B1 (office or light industry), B2 (general industry) B8 (storage and distribution) uses are all considered to be in accordance with Local Plan policy for the reasons outlined above and all the uses would provide for employment in the designated industrial estate. On this basis, I recommend the application for approval subject to the following conditions.

5 RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following condition:

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

The proposed development, subject to the conditions stated, is considered to comply with the policies of the Development Plan (Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and South East Plan 2009) and there are no overriding material considerations to indicate a refusal of planning consent.