

REFERENCE NO - 20/500163/FULL	
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Erection of a deck above (part of) the existing car park to provide 211 additional parking spaces, with associated lighting and other ancillary works.	
ADDRESS Maidstone And Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Maidstone Hospital, Hermitage Lane Maidstone, Kent, ME16 9QQ	
RECOMMENDATION Grant subject to the conditions listed below.	
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION The provision of additional car parking will allow the Hospital to address an existing shortfall of parking accommodation on the site for staff and patients / visitors. The proposals is adequately separated from neighbouring residents and enhanced planting will mitigate any potential additional impacts.	
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Called in by Cllr Vizzard in order to allow landscape and other potential impacts to be assessed.	
WARD Heath	APPLICANT Maidstone And Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust AGENT Stripe Consulting
TARGET DECISION DATE 13/04/20	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE Neighbour / stat' consultees - 11/02/20 Site Notice - 20/02/20 Press Notice - 21/02/20
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY The Hospital is a large site with a complex planning history, the majority of which is not relevant to this application. However, Members should note that the case below is referred to within the Officer assessment. 16/501007/FULL - Construction of new 145 space patient and visitor car park with lighting columns. Approved Decision Date: 25.04.2016	

MAIN REPORT

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The application site comprises part of the Hospital's existing eastern car park (circa 320 - 330 spaces), together with the southern vehicle circulation route (the latter only being shown to demonstrate access to the public highway).
- 1.02 The wider Hospital campus contains a range of clinical buildings and supporting infrastructure, with the principal staff and visitor parking areas being located to the east and western sides respectively. Both car parks are accessed via the main access and egress points to Hermitage Lane via the internal circulation road.
- 1.03 This car park lies on the eastern part of the hospital campus, with clinical buildings located to the west and south. Whilst the helipad lies west of the car park, behind a small clinical block, the submission of the application follows an agreement between the Hospital and the Air Ambulance Service (and liaison with the CAA in terms of their advisory capacity) in regard of the location and height of the car park.
- 1.04 The northern boundary is marked by a public footpath and wooded area beyond, which separate the Hospital campus from residential development sites. The

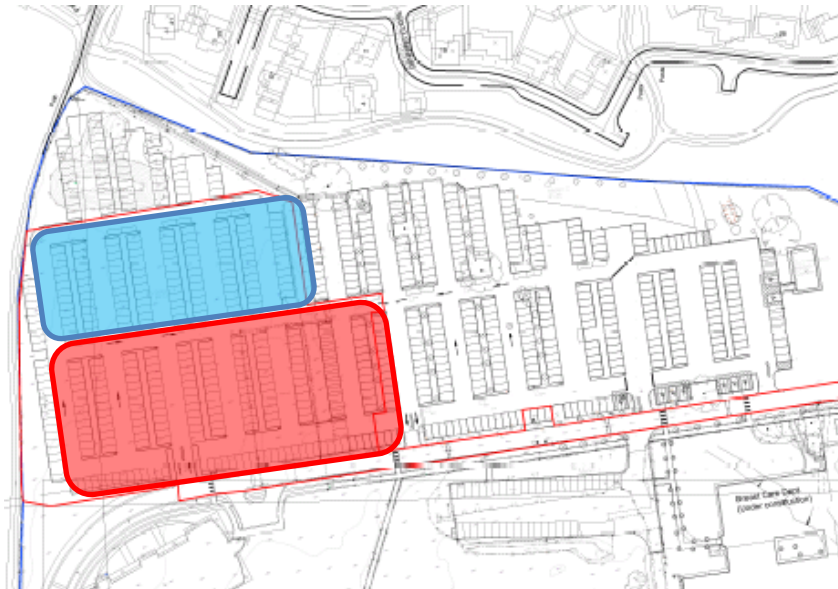
eastern boundary to the car park contains a narrow strip of planting within the site, together with an adjacent footpath / green wedge which separates the site from residential properties located within Chartwell Drive and Denning Close.

- 1.05 Many of these properties have an open frontage onto the green wedge and the car park beyond, particularly during seasons when the vegetation is not in full leaf. A degree of inter-visibility therefore exists between the site, residential neighbours and parties using the adjacent public footpaths.

2. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The Hospital's submissions highlight that the site provides acute in and outpatient care for a population catchment of over 150,000 with the hospital providing the Cancer Centre for the whole Kent area and having been identified as one of Kent's future Hyper Acute Stroke Services. Circa 3,000 staff are employed, with staff based at the Trust's other sites / services, attending Maidstone at certain times in their role of delivering Trust-wide services.
- 2.02 The Hospital advises that difficulties arising from inadequate levels of car parking impact beyond the convenience of staff or visitors, as they adversely affect the levels of clinical care due to, for example, missed or delayed appointments.
- 2.03 The Trust advises that it is seeking to provide a balanced improvement in the level and availability of parking for both staff and visitors.
- 2.04 Evidence from past site visits confirms that the site (and the surrounding area) have experienced issues associated with overspill parking, including unneighbourly parking on nearby residential streets and vehicles parked in inappropriate areas within the Hospital site itself. Evidence submitted with the application suggests that up to 180 vehicles have been parked illegally on site, with parking taking place on, for example:
- service roads and service bays
 - green verges / open spaces
 - central isles, circulation routes and turning areas within the car park, including double parking
- 2.05 In 2016, the Hospital received planning permission for 145 additional spaces, which were to be located on open land to the west of the application site, between it and the main Hospital building complex. However, if this approved car parking area were implemented, it would potentially reduce the future operational flexibility of the Hospital complex and would, for example, increase the proportion of the site covered by hardstanding. The Hospital therefore proposes an alternative parking scheme, in the form of a deck over part of the existing eastern car park. However, the previously approved location will be made available, with temporary surfacing, to provide additional parking capacity during the construction period for these works.
- 2.06 The sketch below identifies the two elements of the existing car park where changes are proposed.
- The smaller shaded area identifies an area of the existing car park where the alignment of existing parking bays and isles at surface level may be slightly changed following completion of the deck (in order to ensure that free circulation is maintained). There will be no increase in the total number of parking spaces within this area (indeed a potential reduction to allow the boundary planting to be extended) and no change to the character or intensity of artificial lighting.

- The larger shaded area identifies the approximate footprint of the proposed deck, which is set away from the boundary, with the closest residential properties being separated by a distance of circa 60-65 metres.
- The unshaded area of the car park will remain unchanged, including those parts closest to residential neighbours.
- The deck is located adjacent to the car park entrance in order to encourage the greatest turnover of spaces within the area farthest from neighbours.



- 2.07 The car park will be constructed off a steel frame structure with the ramps and deck surfaces comprising pre-cast concrete panels. This modular form of construction is designed to reduce the overall construction programme and, for example, to limit the amount of intrusive ground works; a benefit to both the sensitive operational nature of the Hospital and its neighbours.
- 2.08 The sides of the upper deck will be contained by galvanised mesh panels, with those on the more sensitive eastern elevation being more solid in order to avoid headlamp spillage towards residential neighbours.
- 2.09 The application is supported by a tree survey, ecological survey and a biodiversity enhancement scheme that looks at the wider hospital site and these reports are addressed within the assessment below.
- 2.10 The scheme will include the installation of 12 No. electric vehicle charging bays, to be located within an area of the car park that is most flexible to future needs.
- 2.11 The proposed footprint of the new deck is circa 96 metres by 52.5 metres with ramps at both ends and pedestrian stairs. The height of the new parking slab will be circa 3.6 metres, with the guard screens rising to circa 4.8 metres. The upper height of any lighting columns will be circa 6.5 metres. As a comparison, a typical two-storey house could rise to say 5 - 6 metres to eaves and say 8 - 9 metres at ridge. The height of the car park will therefore be lower than the majority of buildings on the campus.
- 2.12 As recommended by the NPPF (para 38) and both MBC and KCC guidance, the application has been the subject of pre-application discussions with both MBC Officers and the Highway Authority. The Hospital has also engaged with Local Members and committed to further liaison with residents groups. This process has

assisted in identifying potential issues and the level of material that would be necessary to support the application. However, in response to resident concerns about, for example, early fencing of the site; it should be emphasised that whilst the pre-application process is intended to support the formal assessment process, it does not in any way represent pre-determination on any issue.

3. POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017

Relevant MBLP policies are:

- SS1 – infrastructure schemes will be supported
- SP23 – sustainable transport
- DM1 – good design
- DM3 – natural environment
- DM4 – brownfield land
- DM6 – air quality
- DM8 – external lighting
- DM21 – transport impacts

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The assessment process has also been guided by the following NPPF references:

- 8/92 – support healthy communities
- 38 – positive decision-making
- 39 – pre-application engagement
- 108 – assess transport impacts and promote sustainable development
- 117 – make effective use of land
- 127+ design quality
- 175 – biodiversity considerations
- 180 - noise

4. LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

Local Residents:

4.01 Six local residents have raised raising the following (summarised) issues:

- Support the principle of the deck being set further back
- Support the concept of a green wall
- Loss of privacy
- Increased traffic, noise and pollution (air quality dust and light)
- Impacts will be exacerbated by the height of the deck
- Hospital should consider a second exit
- Proposed lighting scheme acceptable
- Loss of trees and ecological impacts
- Concern over premature commencement
- Additional on-site parking will not prevent off-site parking
- Suggest western car park would be a better option
- Inadequate noise assessment
- Existing noise attenuation should be retained
- Inadequate EV parking

- 4.02 Matters raised, which are not material planning considerations and therefore cannot be taken into account in the determination of this application include; loss of value and parking charges.

5. CONSULTATIONS

(Please note that summaries of consultation responses are set out below with the response discussed in more detail in the main report where considered necessary)

Ward Cllr Vizzard

- 5.01 Expresses concern in relation to the loss of trees, light spillage and the potential impacts on residents to the east.

County Councillors Bird and Daly

- 5.02 Support the principle of additional staff parking on-site and measures by the Hospital to encourage the use of park and ride. However, concerned with the loss of 69 trees and would expect to see more details of the replacement planting. Support the proposals to incorporate a green wall system and request early implementation. Support the introduction of EV charging points, but request that the capacity for future expansion is in-built.

Natural England

- 5.03 No comments to make.

KCC PRoW

- 5.04 No relevant comments to make.

MBC Environmental Health

- 5.05 No comments submitted.

Kent CC Highways

- 5.06 The application has been the subject of pre-application discussions with KCC Highways in relation to the submitted TA and a draft Travel Plan. KCC are currently assessing the submitted transport assessment in order to ensure that the methodology used is robust and that any potential impacts that may arise can be suitably mitigated.
- 5.07 In terms of the overall parking strategy KCC Highways recognise the importance of parking being available at the Hospital, but having regard to local conditions wish to ensure that increased congestion on local journey times, road safety and air pollution are not exacerbated.
- 5.08 Members will be updated as necessary should any further mitigation measures be identified beyond those detailed below.

6. APPRAISAL

Main Issues

- 6.01 During the assessment of this application a number of meetings have taken place with local residents and between Ward Members and the Applicant. The assessment and mitigation measures discussed below therefore reflect and respond to both these discussions and the formal written comments summarised below.

The case officer has also visited neighbouring properties in order to view their relationship with the site. The main issues for consideration are therefore:

- The principle of additional parking on-site
- Design and appearance
- Impact upon trees / landscaping and ecology/biodiversity
- Traffic and transport
- The potential impact upon neighbours in terms of:
 - Privacy, Noise, Air Quality, Artificial Light

Principle of Additional Parking

- 6.02 Whilst complex sites such as this do not have a formal parking standard guideline, it is acknowledged that the Hospital has experienced a long-term deficiency in the level of car parking available to both staff and patients / visitors and that this has led to unacceptable parking conditions, both on-site and within surrounding residential streets.
- 6.03 However, whilst providing an adequate level of parking to meet current needs may be desirable, as with all land uses, it is important that the Hospital acknowledges the need for and promotes sustainable modes of travel and alternatives to the use of low occupancy private cars. These issues are addressed in further detail below.
- 6.04 The position of a parking deck over an existing hard landscaped area is considered to be preferable to the previously approved option of hard landscaping the green area to the west of the access road. This is not only preferable in terms of say future biodiversity opportunity and existing surface water drainage; but also offers the Hospital greater flexibility in planning for future clinical care provision.
- 6.05 One representation questions whether the Hospital's western car park would be a better option, however, this application has to be considered on its own merits and in the absence of an overriding level of harm, it would not be necessary for this current process to consider whether there are other alternatives.
- 6.06 To summarise on the principle of the car park, there is broad support for additional parking provision, although this subject to the wider policy and environmental considerations identified below, including matters that have been raised by residents that must be considered carefully.
- 6.07 Subject to the following considerations, the principle of development accords with policy SS1 of the MBLP in that it supports the provision of infrastructure and responds to MBLP policy DM4 and the NPPF in making the best use of land.

Design and Appearance

- 6.08 MBLP Policy DM1 seeks to promote high quality design which, where appropriate, should:
- respect the amenity of neighbours
 - respond to local context
 - protect or enhance biodiversity
 - ensure safe vehicle movements
- 6.09 The car park is by its nature, a structure the form of which is driven by function rather than design. It's appearance is utilitarian and the use of steel and concrete do not incorporate natural elements.

- 6.10 The Hospital site as a whole is not considered to be visually sensitive and contains a wide range of buildings styles, hard surfacing and supporting operational plant. The location of the car park is set well away from the primary road frontage, but is nevertheless visible from two public footpaths and will visible to varying degrees from existing residential properties to the east. It is therefore relevant to assess the visual impact of the proposal in relation to these potentially sensitive receptors.
- 6.11 To the east, residential properties in both Chartwell Drive and Denning Close are situated close to the Hospital boundary. As identified above, the new deck is set back within the existing parking area. Distances between the deck structure and neighbouring houses vary from circa 60metres to circa 90-100metres. This distance is, in itself, an appropriate level of separation to avoid any overbearing impact and as the new structure will be viewed in the context of the existing expanse of car parking, it will not appear alien in function.
- 6.12 The same principle applies to the footpath that separates the housing from the hospital site. However, as the proposal will introduce a relatively utilitarian structure within an otherwise surface level area, it is considered that appropriate mitigation should be proposed to reduce its visible impact.
- 6.13 The proposal will be sited relatively close to the northern boundary, circa 10 – 15 metres and will clearly be visible to users of the adjacent footpath, which links through to Hermitage Lane. The character of the footpath is dominated by the tall established woodland immediately to the north, with the younger landscaping to the south, within the car park, being less mature.
- 6.14 Whilst the footpath's character is therefore defined by significant extents of natural planting, users will potentially perceive the bulk of the structure as they pass by its circa 50 metre shorter elevation. This impact is not considered to be unacceptable in principle, but an enhanced level of landscaping within the site will ensure that its existing character is maintained.
- 6.15 In addition to the landscaping details assessed below, the Trust proposes that the car park structure incorporates a living wall. This is considered to be a positive feature that will offer significant visual and potentially biodiversity benefits. It is proposed that the scheme is secured through condition as part of the wider landscape and biodiversity enhancements listed below. A well executed living wall will have the potential to create a feature of interest within the Hospital campus.
- 6.16 Having regard to the Hospital's procurement programme for the proposed works, this landscaping scheme would be submitted within 3-6 months of the commencement of the car park works and be carried out within the first appropriate planting season. Whilst there may therefore be a short term visual impact, this is not in itself justification to oppose the scheme on design grounds and will be outweighed by the net benefits in the longer term as the planting scheme becomes established.
- 6.17 It is therefore considered that subject to the mitigation measures identified, the proposal is able to respond positively to the objectives of MBLP Policy DM1 and the NPPF.

Existing Trees / Proposed Landscaping / Biodiversity Enhancement

Existing Trees

- 6.18 MBLP Policies DM 1 and 3 require development to respect and enhance the natural environment and to retain landscape features of visual and biodiversity significance. The area of car parking to the south of the application site contains a

number of TPO trees, however, the development boundary is sited well away from this group. Nevertheless, as part of the suite of planning conditions, measures to ensure that construction traffic does not affect this area will be secured. Similarly, the large area of woodland to the north of the site will not be affected by the proposed works.

- 6.19 The application is accompanied by a detailed arboricultural assessment, which has considered the net impact of the proposals.
- 6.20 The existing car park is characterised by a series of planting beds, which contain relatively young trees and shrubs. Whilst these offer visual mitigation to the car park, they substantially comprise ornamental and non-native species. These species offer relatively limited landscape and ecological value and the Trust has therefore partnered with the Kent Wildlife Trust to develop a new planting and biodiversity enhancement strategy, not simply for the car park area, but across the Hospital site as a whole. This strategy will involve a no-net loss approach in terms of trees to be replaced, with a phased naturalisation of planting across the site as a whole.
- 6.21 The assessment identifies the potential for 69 trees to be removed, but this maximum figure assumes that all surface trees within the car will be lost, which may not be necessary. The loss of a significant number of trees is regrettable as their future landscape and biodiversity benefits will be lost. However, as a significant number of these trees are relatively immature, of very limited ecological value and have introduced ornamental and invasive species, it is considered that their programmed replacement will ultimately represent a long term benefit for the site.

Ecology and Biodiversity Enhancement

- 6.22 The ecological survey identifies that no significant habitat or species are present within the application boundary. The character of the main car park area, with isolated planting beds set within high kerbs, amongst large areas of car parking is not considered to be a significant potential habitat for reptiles or amphibians, badgers or dormice. Nor does the site contain habitat suitable for bat roosting, with the main potential for bat habitat and roosting being the more substantial wooded areas to the north and east.
- 6.23 Whilst the assessment does not consider that, having regard to the existing car park use, there will be any direct impact upon the ecologically sensitive woodland to the north, it recommends measures to contain construction impacts and the effect of new lighting; both of which are to be addressed through conditions. The report also recommends that existing non-native invasive species be removed.
- 6.24 In response to the ecological assessment, the Trust has engaged the Kent Wildlife Trust to advise on; not only appropriate mitigation measures for trees and habitat that are to be removed, but to assess how a Hospital site-wide enhancement scheme can be delivered.
- 6.25 KWT identify that the peripheral areas of the Hospital site contain the greatest potential as they are less intensively managed, with the internal car parking areas and generally mown grass currently offering little potential in their current form. KWT have therefore set out a series of recommendations in relation to both direct mitigation measures and site wide enhancement opportunities. These include, for example:

Mitigation

- Incorporation of living wall to the car park
- Woodland wildflowers within the northern and eastern boundary edges

- Increased depth of planting on the eastern boundary with the introduction of native hedgerow and lower height tree species
- Introduction of native trees and shrubs within existing surface car park
- Creation of dead wood habitat and reptile refuges on the northern and eastern boundaries

Site – Wide Enhancement

- Creation of pocket wildlife meadows and beds across the site (including raised beds to provide sensory experiences for patients)
- Further site living walls and green roofs
- Phased replacement of non native species
- Site wide refuges for reptiles
- Enhancement of existing ponds to be wildlife friendly, introduction of native aquatics
- Assess locations for additional ponds

- 6.26 It is anticipated that such measures would form part of a five year initial management plan. However, priority is to be given to the enhancement of the eastern boundary with neighbouring residential properties and the planting within the adjacent surface level car park, thus providing adjacent residents with amenity benefits early within the overall programme. As a part of this scheme, the hospital will be required to not only strengthen planting within the eastern boundary, but to increase its depth, providing both enhanced visual screening, but also an enhanced habitat. MBC Officers have encouraged the Hospital Trust and KWT to engage with residents in the design planning and implementation of this scheme, not only to secure their buy-in, but also, for example, to provide a biodiversity learning opportunity for residents.
- 6.27 Subject to the direct mitigation measures identified above, it is considered that the scheme is capable of delivering net benefits both within the application site and the wider Hospital campus, thus according with the principles of MBLP Policy DM3 and the NPPF.

Parking, Traffic and Transport

- 6.28 The Hospital currently has a total of 1,537 spaces, the majority contained within the two main parking areas, but with other smaller parking areas dedicated to clinical units around the site. The current split between staff and visitor allocation is circa 70:30. As detailed above, surveys show that for significant periods, the existing car parks operate over capacity, with the resulting issues of illegal on-site and also neighbourhood parking.
- 6.29 The transport assessment is therefore based upon the additional parking being necessary to meet existing needs and to alleviate existing issues, rather than attracting additional traffic to the site. This approach is broadly sound, although it is considered that there will be a net additional level of traffic.
- 6.30 Ensuring an adequate delivery of parking for staff to enable the delivery of clinical services and access to those services by the public (visitor and patient parking) is a recognised need. The need to address the current parking conditions is a significant material consideration, but must also be weighed against the objective of promoting sustainable alternatives.

- 6.31 The longer-term preference of KCC would be to see the balance between staff and visitor parking move towards visitors in the longer term. Whilst this is not a matter than this planning application can control, outside of the application process KCC officers have been working with the Hospital and their appointed consultants in order to prepare a new staff travel plan that encourages staff to move to more sustainable options. Measure currently being undertaken / considered include, for example:

Existing Measures

- Staff engagement events re travel habits
- Short-term shuttle service to park and ride in liaison with Arriva
- Membership of the Arriva discounted travel club
- Free staff travel on identified bus routes
- Membership of the cycle-to-work scheme

Planned Measures Being Considered

- Enhanced secure cycle parking
- Investigation of enhanced pedestrian connectivity
- An extended EV parking scheme
- Promotion of a car sharing club with dedicated car share bays
- Enhanced staff public transport information

- 6.32 The Hospital is considered to be a sustainable location, with good pedestrian / cycle accessibility to the wider area. The site is also well served by bus services, which connect with the town centre and rail routes.

- 6.33 On balance, it is considered that the additional level of parking proposed is an acceptable response to current conditions and will result in net benefits to the delivery of and access to clinical services, without adversely affecting the amenity of neighbours. Ultimately the Council would wish to see the emphasis move away from staff to visitor parking, but this is a matter that will best be addressed through the ongoing development of the Hospital's staff travel plan. As this is an existing travel plan, it is not a conditional requirement of the planning application.

- 6.34 It is therefore considered that, subject to any s278 mitigation measures that may need to be agreed between KCC and the Trust, the application accords with MBLP policies SP23 and DM21 and the relevant provision of the NPPF in relation to transport impacts, parking provision and sustainable transport objectives.

Neighbour Amenity

- 6.35 Consistent with the NPPF, MBLP Policy DM 1 seeks to ensure that developments do not result in unacceptable or excessive impacts upon neighbours. In this instance potential impacts on neighbours are primarily in relation to the residential estate to the east, where the potential impacts include noise, privacy, artificial light impacts and air quality.

- 6.36 It should be noted that the existing relationship, that of a surface car park adjacent to the boundary, will not change, although there will be a widening of the boundary landscape buffer in order to increase visual and physical separation. The prevailing character of the immediate area will therefore not materially change, other than the phased implementation of replacement native landscaping.

- 6.37 Nor will the intensity of use of this surface parking area change, with no increase in parking numbers within the surface level zone. This existing surface area is

already artificially illuminated and there are no proposals to intensify the existing lighting within this area..

- 6.38 By design, the proposal seeks to avoid or mitigate potential amenity impacts. The first is by setting the new deck a substantial distance back from the boundary, with the separation with nearby houses ranging from approximately 60-100 metres.
- 6.39 As detailed above, the principle of the development is based upon the provision of additional formal car parking spaces to address the impacts of an existing deficit, with identified impacts arising from the inadequate provision including, for example:
- Staff and visitor vehicles circulate through the hospital campus and car parks 'hunting' for an available space, before:
 - attempting to park offsite in the surrounding residential areas
 - parking illegally within the estate.
 - sitting waiting for spaces to become available
- 6.40 The resulting effects are an increase in parked vehicle numbers and the number of movements and activity of vehicles manoeuvring within the hospital site, plus additional vehicle movements on the highway network and within surrounding residential estates.

Privacy

- 6.41 Whilst the proposals will introduce new car parking at a physically higher level than the existing surface; due to the significant separation distances, it is not considered that there would be a loss of privacy through overlooking of private properties. Nevertheless, there is the potential for a perception of being overlooked to make residents feel less comfortable.
- 6.42 In order to address this matter, a condition is proposed that will secure an enhanced planting buffer between the relevant homes and the car park area. This enhanced buffer will be both deeper and incorporate an increased level of planting with elements of evergreen where possible to provide year round screening. Whilst such planting may take time to develop and thus there may be some short-term impacts, the proposed conditions will require early planting within this area in order to reduce the net short-term impacts.

Noise

- 6.43 In support of the application, an assessment of existing and predicted noise levels has been undertaken, including a measurement point on the sensitive eastern boundary. The report concludes that as the character of the adjacent area of car parking is not changing, that there will be no material increase in activity and noise within this zone. Officers consider that this presumption is sound and also consider that with an increased level of parking overall, and a shift of the balance close to the main hospital complex, the net movement of vehicles within this area and the propensity for the spaces closest to residents to be used could reduce.
- 6.44 It is therefore considered that within the sensitive area closest to neighbours, the character and use of the car park will not materially change, that there will be no adverse impact and the potential for modest net benefits.
- 6.45 In terms of the increased use of the car park area where the deck is to be created, due to the separation from the boundary and having regard to existing background noise levels, it is not considered that adverse impacts would arise.

Artificial Lighting

- 6.46 The existing surface parking area closest to the eastern boundary is already illuminated and there will be no material change to artificial lighting levels within this zone. Lighting for the new upper area of the deck will comprise pole mounted lights around the deck which are designed to face downwards and inwards so as to minimise any light spillage. The technical lighting study supporting the application demonstrates that light spillage from the deck will not adversely affect the amenity of neighbours as direct light will not reach the boundary.
- 6.47 The scheme incorporates measures to use light efficiently, for example, with motion sensors and dimmed levels when not in use. A condition is proposed to ensure that the lighting scheme is installed as proposed and maintained thereafter.
- 6.48 A further potential impact arises from the projection of car headlamps circulating on the new upper deck. At this level, surface planting will have a more limited screening effect. Whilst the separation distance will be a factor to some extent, by their nature, car headlamps would be capable of penetrating some distance and their potential impact exacerbated by their moving nature. It is therefore proposed that the sides of the upper deck facing towards residential neighbours to the east (and the ecologically sensitive area to the north) are solid, so as to prevent light escaping. The condition would also require the effectiveness of the installed screen to be verified post installation and for their maintenance / retention throughout the lifetime of the car park.
- 6.49 However, as the building will be potentially be visible at night when illuminated, there is the potential that its visual prominence could be reinforced, in particular during the winter months. This, however, is an issue of visual impact rather than amenity and for the reasons set out earlier in this report, through a combination of physical separation and the provision of enhanced boundary landscaping, it is not considered that this impact would be unacceptable and that, with the mitigation proposed, the proposals therefore accord with MBLP Policy DM8.

Air Quality

- 6.50 The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing the environment and minimising pollution by preventing new/existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, inter alia, unacceptable levels of air pollution. It also requires the effects of air pollution and the potential sensitivity of the area to its effects, to be taken into account in planning decisions.
- 6.51 Development of this type has the potential to adversely affect air quality during both the construction phase and operational phase, with the potential to generate dust and fine particulate matter (PM10) during the construction phase and for road traffic nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and fine particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) during its operation.
- 6.52 Whilst construction impacts are not normally a planning matter, being addressed by other legislation, in this instance, due to the sensitivity of some surrounding receptors, a dust mitigation strategy will be part of the required construction management plan.
- 6.53 In terms of operational impacts, potential worsening of air quality would potentially arise if there were a significant increase in the level of traffic using the site and factors such as congestion. The above traffic assessment advises that the net impact of the scheme will be to reduce the impact of vehicles circulating the car park and surrounding area searching for an available space and also removing inappropriate parking both within and outside of the site. Having regard to the projected reduction in activity close to the boundary with residential neighbours, it

is not considered that there would be an adverse impact upon air quality within the application site, arguably a net benefit through a more efficient availability of parking and the removal of unnecessary movements. Air quality is also a sensitive issue on the nearby road network, primarily due to net traffic flows and congestion. At this stage there is no evidence that the scheme would generate significant level of additional traffic or exacerbate congestion, so no reasonable grounds to assume that existing air quality conditions would be adversely affected.

- 6.54 To conclude, it is considered that where necessary, mitigation measures can be imposed through conditions to ensure that any potential impacts upon the amenity of neighbours is adequately mitigated.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 6.55 In considering this application due regard has been had to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. A defined protected group includes 'pregnancy and maternity' and obviously the Hospital site provides care to this group as a whole, with a dedicated unit located towards the southern end of the eastern car park. The above assessment has therefore had regard to the potential of a risk of negative impacts. However, for the reasons set out in the above assessment, namely, no significant increase in traffic nor material worsening of environmental conditions, due to the separation of the car park from the maternity unit and through the imposition of planning conditions, I am satisfied that the PSED will not be undermined.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.01 There is a clear need for the additional car parking in order to alleviate both operational impacts and the delivery of clinical care. The location of the deck is considered to be the optimum location in terms of mitigating any impact upon neighbours. Proposed mitigation measures will ensure that the changed character of parking provision will not adversely affect the amenity of neighbours, with the proposed biodiversity compensation and site wide enhancements offering the potential for a significant long-term net gain.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.01 Subject to the framework of conditions suggested below, it is recommended that Members GRANT delegated authority to the Head of Planning to finalise the detailed wording of the necessary conditions and to issue the planning permission.

Proposed 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. In accordance with approved drawings

- 2) The materials to be used in the development hereby approved shall be as indicated on the approved plans and the Ballast Needham Design & Access Statement Ref J1335 dated 13.01.20, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

- 3) The development hereby approved shall not commence until a construction site management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such plan shall provide measures for:
- Management of dust to prevent off-site impacts
 - Managing the impact of construction noise, dust and artificial lighting on adjacent sensitive receptors, namely residential properties and woodland:
 - Anticipated construction programme (including works undertaken at each stage)
 - Hours of working
 - Management of artificial lighting, including temporary lighting
 - Site security
 - Construction traffic routeing
 - Working hours
 - Site contact (including out of hours)
 - Storage and removal of waste
 - Storage of construction material
 - Wheel cleaning and street cleaning measures
 - Measures to prevent discharge of surface pollutants into the drainage system
 - Any necessary scheme for the protection or temporary closure of pedestrian footways

The construction method statement shall be made available for members of public to review upon request. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement. The method statement shall also include details of the means of recycling materials, the provision of parking facilities for contractors during all stages of the development and the provision of a means of storage and/or delivery for all plant, site huts, site facilities and materials.

Reason: To ensure that the construction of the development minimises the construction impacts upon neighbours, ecological sensitivities and the hospital's delivery of clinical care.

- 4) Prior to the new parking deck hereby approved being brought into use a landscape and biodiversity enhancement scheme in accordance with the principles of the submitted Biodiversity Enhancement Report December 2019, shall be submitted for the approval in writing of the local planning authority. The scheme shall show all existing trees, hedges and blocks of landscaping on, and immediately adjacent to, the site and indicate whether they are to be retained or removed, provide details of on site replacement planting to mitigate any loss of amenity and biodiversity value [together with the location of any habitat piles] and include a planting specification, a programme of implementation and a [5] year management plan.

The landscape scheme shall specifically address the need to provide enhanced planting to screen the eastern boundary and notwithstanding the submitted plans, shall show an increased depth to the existing eastern boundary landscaped area.

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

- 5) Any existing trees or hedges retained on site or planted as part of the scheme to be approved under Condition 4, which, within a period of five years from the completion of the deck, die or become, in the opinion of the local planning authority, so seriously damaged or diseased that their long term amenity value has been

adversely affected, shall be replaced in the same location during the next planting season (October to February), with plants of an appropriate species and size to mitigate the impact of the loss as agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

- 6) Prior to the new parking deck hereby approved being brought into use a living wall scheme for the new car park deck shall be submitted for the approval in writing of the local planning authority. The scheme shall include, as a minimum, measures to address the eastern and northern elements. Such works shall be implemented within the first available planting season following completion of the new deck. The scheme shall include a management plan to ensure the establishment of the new planting, with measures to address the failure of any elements within the first five years.

Reason: In the interests of landscape, visual impact and amenity of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development

- 7) Prior to the new parking deck hereby approved being brought into use, written confirmation of the installation and location of 12No. electric vehicle charging point has been installed on the given building(s) with dedicated off street parking, and shall thereafter be retained for that purpose.

Reason: To promote the reduction of CO2 emissions through the use of low emissions vehicles.

- 8) No external lighting shall be installed on-site, other than in accordance within the 'Wirefield Maidstone Hospital MSCP-V2' lighting report dated 10.01.20 and S.11 of the Ballast Needham Design & Access Statement Ref J1335 dated 13.01.20 and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that artificial lighting is maintained at a level that does not adversely affect the amenity of residents or adjacent ecological habitat..

- 9) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

J1335-STRIPE-XX-00-SK-AX-30001-SITE LOCATION PLAN

J1335-Stripe-Xx-00-Sk-Ax-Xx-30002-Existing Site Plan

J1335-Stripe-Xx-00-Sk-Ax-Xx-30003-Proposed Site Plan

J1335-Stripe-Xx-00-Sk-Ax-Xx-30004-Proposed Ground Floor Plan

J1335-Stripe-Xx-00-Sk-Ax-Xx-30005-Proposed Level 1 Plan

J1335-Stripe-Xx-00-Sk-Ax-Xx-30500-Proposed Elevations

J1335-Stripe-Xx-00-Sk-Ax-Xx-30600-Proposed Sections

Ballast Needham Design & Access Statement Ref J1335 dated 13.01.20

Wirefield Maidstone Hospital MSCP-V2' lighting report dated 10.01.20

Kent Wildlife Trust Biodiversity Enhancement Report, December 2019

Reason: To clarify which plans and material have been approved.

INFORMATIVES

- 1) The Trust is encouraged to continue working with MBC, KCC and public transport operators with regard to the development and monitoring of a site-wide travel plan.
- 2) Works to trees could result in disturbance to wild animals, plants and important wildlife sites protected by law. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that appropriate precautions are taken to ensure that an offence is not committed. Further advice can be sought from Natural England and/or Kent Wildlife Trust.

Case Officer: Austin Mackie