

**REPORT SUMMARY**

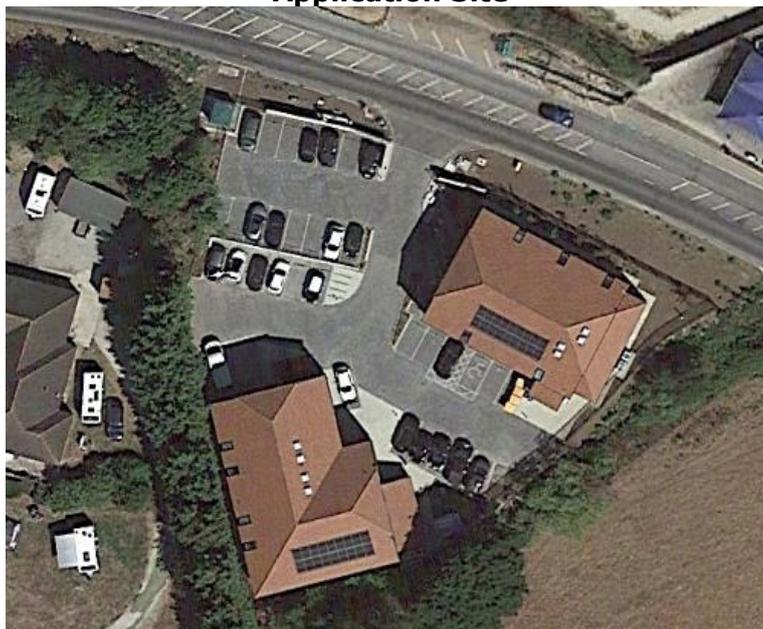
<b>REFERENCE NO:</b> - 23/500362/FULL		
<b>APPLICATION PROPOSAL:</b> Proposed erection of an infill extension to ground floor of Unit 1 (Northern Office block) alongside alterations to car parking layout to allow for additional floorspace		
<b>ADDRESS:</b> Unit 1 Genco Business Park Ashford Road Hollingbourne Kent ME17 1XH		
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b> GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to conditions		
<b>SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:</b> The development is acceptable regarding the relevant provisions of the Development Plan, the NPPF and all other material considerations such as are relevant.		
<b>REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE:</b> The reasons for referral to committee from Hollingbourne Parish Council are detailed below within section 4 (Local Representations).		
<b>WARD:</b> North Downs	<b>PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL:</b> Hollingbourne	<b>APPLICANT:</b> Genco Construction Ltd  <b>AGENT:</b> DHA Planning
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b> William Fletcher	<b>VALIDATION DATE:</b> 25/01/23	<b>DECISION DUE DATE (EOT):</b> 30/06/23
<b>ADVERTISED AS A DEPARTURE:</b> No		

**Relevant Planning History**

20/501428/FULL - Erection of 2no. two storey office buildings with associated car park, landscaping and fencing. Permitted 04/11/2020.

**MAIN REPORT**

**Application Site**



## 1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 In policy terms the application site is located in the countryside.
- 1.02 The site can be found near Junction 8 of the M20, to the south of the A20, approximately 5 kilometres east of Maidstone town centre. To the north of the site is junction 8 of the M20 and opposite the application site is a light industrial and storage unit site at Woodcut Farm. The site is prominent in the landscape.
- 1.03 There are two, two storey buildings on the site which provide office accommodation accessed via a gated ragstone wall entrance.
- 1.04 Units 1 & 2 are both of a significant scale adding to their prominence but seek to mimic a Kent farmstead style with black painted weatherboard on brick plinth under barn hipped red clay tile roof. The application building includes an unusual undercroft parking arrangement, which is depicted in the below appraisal section.

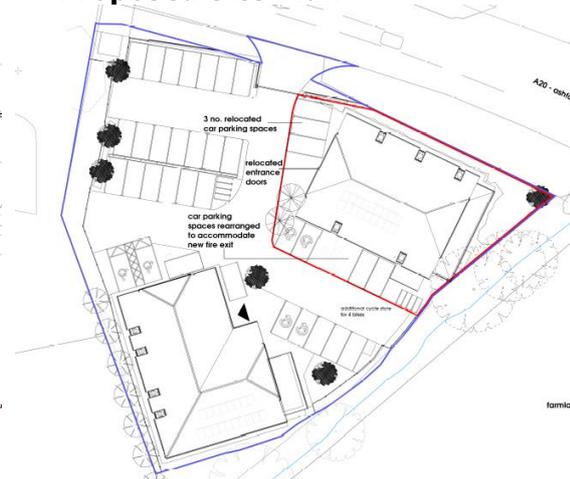
## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.01 One of the two existing commercial buildings (Unit 1) was constructed with an undercroft and enclosed parking area. The current application seeks to remove this undercroft parking incorporating the space into the main building as additional office space.
- 2.02 The proposal for additional open plan office and reception space will increase the floorspace of Unit 1 by 129m<sup>2</sup> (c.20 percent) from 509m<sup>2</sup> to 638m<sup>2</sup>. Unit 2 will remain unchanged. The two office buildings on site have access to a total of 44 parking spaces
- 2.03 The proposal would remove six parking bays located within the undercroft parking area of Unit 1, and convert this area to office accommodation, realign the three parking bays to the west of Unit 1 to be at right-angles to the access road, and allow pedestrian access to the new Unit 1 entrance; and remove a single parking bay to the south of Unit 1 to provide pedestrian access to a new side entrance. As such a total of 37 spaces are proposed (Loss of 7 spaces), parking arrangements depicted below.

**Existing Site Plan**



**Proposed Site Plan**



**Local Residents:** No representations received from local residents

**Hollingbourne Parish Council Comment:**

Hollingbourne Parish Council have objected to the application based on concerns that the application may be over development of the site. The Parish have requested the application be considered by the Planning Committee should the case officers' recommendation be contrary to the Parish.

### **3. POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2011-2031):

SP17 - Countryside

DM1 - Principles of good design

DM23 – Parking standards

DM30 – Design principles in the countryside

DM37 – Expansion of existing businesses in rural areas

Maidstone Borough Council – Local Plan Review, draft plan for submission (Regulation 22) dated October 2021.

The Regulation 22 draft is a material consideration however weight is currently limited, as it is the subject of an examination in public that commenced on the 6 September 2022 (Stage 1 hearings concluded). The relevant policies in the draft plan are as follows:

SP9 Development in the Countryside

SP15 Design

TRA4 Parking standards (Appendix B)

Q&D4 Design Principles in the Countryside

### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

#### **KCC Highways**

4.01 No objection

### **5. APPRAISAL**

The key issues are:

- Location in the countryside
- Visual impact
- Residential amenity
- Highways

#### **Location in the countryside**

5.01 The application site is in the countryside and the starting point for assessment of all applications in the countryside is Local Plan Policy SP17. Policy SP17 states that development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless:

- a) they will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area and
- b) they accord with other Local Plan policies

5.02 In relation to SP17 a) and considering the impact of development on the character and appearance of the countryside the relevant adopted local plan policies are DM1 and DM30.

5.03 Policies DM1 and DM30 both require development (including the type, siting, materials and design, mass and scale of buildings, and activity should maintain, or where possible enhance, local distinctiveness, and any impacts on the appearance and character of the landscape should be appropriately mitigated.

5.04 The application site is located within Leeds Castle Parklands Landscape Character Area, which the landscape character guidelines note is an "Artificial landform as part of golf course at Leeds Castle". The 'detailed landscape assessment' notes that application sites specific character is 'Major infrastructure' with modern development and urban influences.

- 5.05 In policy terms the surrounding area is located in the countryside, however, in terms of its visual character, whilst it does retain a rural feel due to the lack of built development, the application site is in close proximity to the M20 and is becoming more developed with the application site buildings built within the last 3 years and the commercial development taking place on the opposite side of A20.
- 5.06 In terms of the design of the development the existing covered parking area would be fully enclosed with materials that match the existing building i.e. brickwork and glazing, as depicted below on the next page.
- 5.07 The proposal does not increase the footprint of the building, and would fully incorporate the existing undercroft parking area into the building using a design and materials that are sympathetic to the existing building. As such it is not assessed that the proposal causes any visual harm.

#### Existing parking area



#### Proposed front elevation



#### Residential amenity

- 5.08 The development causes no amenity issues. There are no residential dwellings in such close proximity that any harm would occur.

#### Highways

- 5.09 The proposal for additional open plan office and reception space will increase the floorspace of Unit 1 by 129m<sup>2</sup> (c.20 percent) from 509m<sup>2</sup> to 638m<sup>2</sup>. Unit 2 will remain unchanged. The two office buildings on site have access to a total of 44 parking spaces.
- 5.10 The proposal would remove six parking bays located within the undercroft parking area of Unit 1, and convert this area to office accommodation, realign the three parking bays to the west of Unit 1 to be at right-angles to the access road, and allow pedestrian access to the new Unit 1 entrance; and remove a single parking bay to the south of Unit 1 to provide pedestrian access to a new side entrance. As such a total of 37 spaces are proposed (Loss of 7 spaces).
- 5.11 Under SPG4 KCC Parking Standards B1 uses (Offices) with between 500 to 2,500m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace are required to provide a 'maximum' of 1 parking space per 25m<sup>2</sup>. This here would require a 'maximum' of 50 spaces, a shortfall of 13. A 'maximum' standard was adopted to restrain the amount of parking allocated for development. There is no minimum standard for parking for this type of development.
- 5.12 The applicant has submitted a transport statement which details how car parking levels on the site have remained static at around 26 vehicles since the offices were occupied.

- 5.13 Considering the proposed increase in office floor space (20%) the applicant calculates that 32 vehicles (26 + 20%) could be expected on site, which remains below the 37 proposed parking spaces.
- 5.14 In terms of existing parking use, the applicant has set out that parking on the site is currently underutilised for several reasons including:
- staff now working remotely post Covid, hence working environment requirements have changed, with staff utilising desk space within offices in a hybrid fashion.
  - "Many spaces are underutilised as visitors to the site are contractors, hence temporary use for pick up/drop off's.
- 5.15 Officer site visits during the day have provided further evidence that on site parking is under used and as such the loss of the proposed car parking spaces is a sensible approach. Additionally, the loss of parking spaces needs to be balanced against the need to make effective use of the land and the economic benefit from increasing the available office space.
- 5.16 There is no on street parking available in the vicinity and as such the development will not result in any overspill which policy DM21 seeks to avoid.
- 5.17 Policy DM21 states that proposals must "Demonstrate that the impacts of trips generated to and from the development are accommodated, remedied or mitigated to prevent severe residual impacts, including where necessary an exploration of delivering mitigation measures ahead of the development being occupied". The proposal is found to be acceptable in terms of trip generation and the highway network. No objections have been received from the local highways authority.

**Expansion of existing rural businesses (policy DM37)**

- 5.18 Policy DM37 of the Local Plan allows the expansion of existing rural businesses in rural areas subject to the criteria listed below. Each criteria is followed by comment.
- i) *New buildings are small in scale and provided the resultant development as a whole is appropriate in scale for the location and can be satisfactorily integrated into the local landscape.*
- 5.19 The current proposal relates to an extension of part of the application building and not a new building. The assessment above concludes that the extension is appropriate in scale for the location and will be integrated into the area.
- ii) *The increase in floorspace would not result in unacceptable traffic levels on nearby roads or a significant increase in use of an existing substandard access.*
- 5.20 As set out above, the proposal has been found to be acceptable in relation to traffic and travel impact.
- iii) *The new development, together with the existing facilities, will not result in an unacceptable loss in the amenity of the area. In particular the impact on nearby properties and the appearance of the development from public roads will be of importance; and*
- 5.21 As set out above, the proposal has been found to be acceptable in relation to amenity impact.
- iv) *No open storage of materials will be permitted unless adequately screened from public view throughout the year.*

- 5.22 There is no space available on the application site for open storage and a condition is recommended that requires the parking spaces to be retained.

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

- 5.23 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.

#### **CIL**

- 5.24 The proposed development is CIL liable. The Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy on 25 October 2017 and began charging on all CIL liable applications approved on and from 1 October 2018. The actual amount of CIL can only be confirmed once all the relevant forms have been submitted and relevant details have been assessed and approved. Any relief claimed will be assessed at the time planning permission is granted or shortly after.

### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.01 The proposal does not increase the footprint of the building and would fully incorporate the existing parking area into the building using materials and a design that are sympathetic to the existing building. As such the proposal will not cause any visual harm.
- 6.02 Whilst the development results in the loss of parking spaces, standards for this type of development are 'maximum' levels and no objections have been received from the highways authority. The development would not have a harmful impact upon parking in the area or the wider highway network.

### **7. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following 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 shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:  
Application for planning permission  
P001 Site Location Plan  
P002 Existing Block Plan  
P003 Existing Floor and Elevations Plan  
P004 Rev A Proposed Block Plan  
P005 Proposed Floor and Elevations Plan  
Design and Access Statement  
Crash Report  
Crash Report Plan  
Reason: To clarify the approved plans and to ensure the development is carried out to an acceptable visual standard.
- 3) The materials to be used in the development hereby approved shall be as indicated on the approved plans.  
Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development
- 4) No development, whether permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any order revoking and/or re-enacting that Order, with or without modification) or not, shall be carried out on the areas shown as parking spaces or service vehicle turning space or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to them;

Reason: Development without adequate parking/turning provision is likely to lead to parking/vehicle turning inconvenient to other road users and in the interests of road safety.

**Informatives:**

- 1) The proposed development is CIL liable. The Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy on 25th October 2017 and began charging on all CIL liable applications approved on and from 1st October 2018. The actual amount of CIL can only be confirmed once all the relevant forms have been submitted and relevant details have been assessed and approved. Any relief claimed will be assessed at the time planning permission is granted or shortly after.