

fluid planning

**Units 12 and 13 Stirling Park
Laker Road
ME1 3QR**

**Internal office extension
Planning Statement
0459**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement sets out the case of the owner, Mr Stickings (*'the applicant'*) for internal alterations and extension to create additional E(g)(i) office floorspace, ancillary to the existing lawful B8 storage and distribution use, at Units 12 and 13 Stirling Park, Laker Road, Rochester ME1 3QR (*'the proposal'*).
- 1.2 Stirling Park is a development of 16 industrial/warehouse units at Rochester airfield and accessed by the north end of Laker Road. Units 12 and 13 are found to the southeast corner of the development. The existing units and host a warehouse and distribution business with ancillary office floor space. To the front of the units, within the site area there is an area of hardstanding with parking spaces.
- 1.3 An application is required due to the planning history of the site. The units at Stirling Park were constructed following the approval of application MC2004/2010 in 2005 for a mixed use with class B1(c), B2 and B8 floor space. One of the conditions of this original permission required approval for the addition of any mezzanine floors. Condition 6 required that 'no mezzanine floors other than those shown on the drawings herein approved shall be introduced/constructed within the buildings without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority'. The reason given for including this condition was that 'development without adequate parking/turning provision is likely to lead to parking inconvenient to other road users and in the interest of road safety'.
- 1.4 Since their construction several units on the estate have applied, and received permission, for the addition of mezzanine floor space. When assessing these applications officers found there was no objection to the principle of the development and that parking standards could be met.

MC2008/0784

Unit 5 – Installation of multi level mezzanine floors

Approved August 2008

MC2007/1669

Unit 12 – Installation of internal two storey structure to create offices

Approved November 2007

MC2007/0060

Unit 15 – Installation of internal mezzanine floor including partitioning to form office
Approved March 2007

MC2006/1716

Unit 11 – insertion of a mezzanine floor at first level

Approved January 2007

- 1.5 The existing lawful use of Units 12 and 13 is B8, storage or distribution, on the ground floor with ancillary office spaces on the ground and first floor. The proposal would be an internal extension of the existing two storey office space in unit 12 to provide additional office floor space. The proposed use class of the units would remain as B8, *storage or distribution*, along with the E(g)(i) *offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions* ancillary to the lawful use. The result of the proposal would be a gain in E(g)(i) floorspace of 147.3m² and a reduction in B8 floorspace by 72.2m². The net gain in floor space for the units would be 75.1m².
- 1.6 The planning matters here concern the retention of existing employment uses and the highways impact of the development.

2. Policy Justification

- 2.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires the decision maker to take account of (a) the provisions of the development plan, (b) local finance considerations, and (c) any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires determination of applications to be in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (*'Framework'*) is a material consideration in planning decisions. Relevant Framework policy is referred to further as necessary below.
- 2.2 The local plan is made up of the Medway Local Plan which was adopted in May 2003 (*'the LP'*).
- 2.3 The topics for discussion relevant to the Proposal will include employment areas, the highways impact of development and vehicle parking standards.

Economic Development

- 2.4 LP policy ED1, Existing Employment Areas, defines employment areas on a proposals map where development will only be permitted for Business (Class B1), general industrial (Class B2) and storage or distribution (Class B8). It should be noted that the Use Classes were updated in September 2020 with Class B1 effectively being replaced by the new Class E(g), and Classes B2 and B8 remaining valid. The text accompanying the policy states that *'priority will be given to the retention of existing employment uses'* and that *'proposals for new development and extensions which are likely to generate further employment will be permitted'*.
- 2.5 The application site is within the defined Employment Area of Laker Road Industrial Estate and units 12 and 13 are host to a well-established business. The existing and proposed use classes are B8 and E(g)(i) which fall within those permitted. Whilst the proposal would result in a loss of B8 floor space, of 72.2m², it would result in a greater gain of E(g)(i) floor space, of 147.3m². The additional office floorspace is needed for the changing functions of the applicant's business. It would enable the existing employment use to be retained at the site. The development therefore aligns with the goals of policy ED1.

Transportation

- 2.6 LP policy T1, Impact of Development, assesses highways impacts and policy T13, Vehicle Parking Standards, expects development to meet the adopted standard. In this case the adopted standard is the Medway Council Parking Standards which were adopted in May 2001.
- 2.7 The proposal would result in net addition of 75m² of new floor space to the existing storage and ancillary office which represents a 7.6% change for the units. The increase in office floor space is offset by a reduction in storage space. The proposal would provide improved office space for the existing staff and no new staff would be required. The proposal would not lead to any significant change in vehicle movements to and from the site. The access arrangements for the site would remain the same and there would be no impact on highways safety.
- 2.8 As shown on the existing and proposed block plan, drawings GB/JS/003 A and GB/JS/005 A, on-site parking is provided by hardstanding to the front of the units. No

change to this parking provision is proposed by this application. The drawing shows spaces for 12 private car parking spaces and, in addition, there is unassigned space for turning and manoeuvring and for the parking of delivery vehicles as and when required.

2.9 The parking standards which would apply to the proposed floorspace are set out as follows:

E(g)(i) Office floor space 497.9m²

Maximum permitted private parking = 17 spaces

Cycle spaces minimum requirement = 2 spaces

Commercial vehicles – provision for deliveries off the public highway required.

B8 storage and distribution 567.8m² floor space and 4412.86m³ building volume

Maximum permitted private parking = 6 spaces

Cycle spaces minimum requirement = 2 spaces

Commercial vehicles minimum = 3 spaces

2.10 Combined the site would need to demonstrate a maximum private parking spaces of 23, a minimum cycle parking spaces of 4 and a minimum of 3 spaces for the parking of commercial vehicles.

2.11 The proposal meets the adopted standard for private parking as it would not exceed the maximum permitted spaces. Commercial vehicles have space to park on the hardstanding to the front of the units. There is no capacity to provide additional parking on site but none is required because there would be no increase in employees and there would be a reduction in B8 floor space. There would be no increase in demand for private or commercial vehicle parking. It is noted that the requirement for commercial vehicle spaces is based on the volume of the building. However, in reality, not all of this floor space could be used for B8 storage and distribution. The ancillary functions of the warehouse also need to be housed to provide room for circulation, fire escapes, staff facilities and w/c's. There would also be a limit to the height of any storage within the building and this needs to fall below the eaves height of 5.7 metres. The actual need for commercial vehicle parking is therefore considered to be lower than the parking standards require. In any case this application would result in a reduction in B8 floor space and, in comparison to the existing arrangement, would result in no increase in commercial vehicle parking. Cycle parking can be provided outside the building, and this could be managed by a

planning condition if the authority consider it necessary.

3. Summary

- 3.1 The application is for an internal extension of office floor space within established units on an industrial estate. The office floor space is needed by the applicant to enable the business to be retained in the existing units and for it to continue offering local employment. Planning permission is required due to a condition on the original permission regarding mezzanine floors. Mezzanine floors have previously been approved for several units in the employment area. The proposal would result in a small net increase to the floor space of the building, that would not generate any material change to vehicle movements to or from the site. The existing parking provision to the front of the building would be retained and provides sufficient on-site parking and space for deliveries. The development would not be inconvenient to other road users or prejudice highways safety.
- 3.2 The proposal would support the existing business use of the site within an employment area. The reason for the condition on the original application has been considered and there would be no increase in on-site parking or harm to the highways network. It is requested that planning permission be granted.

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