

Planning Reference 23/500899/OUT

APPLICATION FOR

Outline

Address of Site:

Land North of A20, Hollingbourne (Proposed Warehouse)

Proposal:

Application for outline planning permission for storage and distribution floorspace (Class B8 use), up to 116,120 sq. Ft, with ancillary offices, associated car parking, HGV parking, landscaping and infrastructure. All matters reserved except for access.”

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above outline application.

Policy:

Ensuring Key employment sites are delivered, and that local commercial and inward investment is increased are strategic priorities for the Council as set out in the councils adopted Strategic Plan 2019-2045. ‘Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure’ and ‘A Thriving Place.’

This position is also reflected in the councils adopted Economic Development Strategy 2015 – 2031. The Economic Development Strategy sets out three key aims for the Borough to achieve by 2031:

- 1) create 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations,
- 2) raise the economic output (Gross Valued Added (GVA)) per head to that of the South East, and;
- 3) raise the skills profile of residents in Maidstone to the South East average.

The Councils revision to the Economic Development Strategy prepared by Ltichfields and adopted in 2021 continues to recognise these aims with priorities, one, two and four of five priorities focussing on:

Priority One: Open for business.

Maximising our economic role at the heart of Kent and a strong public sector base to create a positive and entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can grow and thrive.

Priority Two: A Greener, more productive economy

Diversifying our economic base and boosting productivity by growing high value activity . including existing strengths in life sciences and new opportunities for clean growth.

Priority 4: Inclusive Growth

Taking an inclusive approach to growth to ensure that all of our communities can benefit from economic success and prosperity.

Jobs, Training and GVA:

The applicant states ‘The proposed development would deliver 110-130 full time jobs and is expected to generate 30 indirect jobs locally and 50 jobs in the wider area (e.g. supply chain positions). Ninety percent of these employees would live locally.

From the evidence provided including HCA employment density guidance 2015 Economic Development believe that these job totals are credible and can be delivered via the proposed scheme.

These jobs could provide higher value activity than average warehousing positions with technical and office positions available as technology in the logistics sector progresses.

The applicant also states that the net GVA annually delivered would amount to £4.7m

Achieving a boost in productivity of the Borough and residents is a key priority for the Council.

If the permission were granted Economic Development would like the opportunity to talk to the developer and any end occupiers about training provision and jobs opportunities for local residents.

Commercial Property Demand:

The Borough remains attractive for inward investment enquiries but is hampered to a certain extent by the supply of available modern fit for purpose commercial units and employment sites close to strategic transport networks.

The applicant seeks to deliver a one two storey B8 commercial warehouse (including mezzanine), with ancillary office. Mezzanine space being 9,190 sqft, with distribution floor space 113,940 sqft on previously undeveloped land.

Although Economic Development would prefer to see a range of size of units to serve the local market, it understands the needs for such units to serve the growing logistic sectors requirements, with direct access to motorway links and national, regional and international markets.

Such developments can provide wider positive economic and environmental impacts such as new supply chains, and cuts to pollution and congestion.

Locate In Kent have identified a lack in supply of modern fit for purpose well located large Logistic Sheds and the applicant has provided evidence to this effect in their submission via their CO Star analysis.

5.22 Analysing the pipeline, there are just four units of the scale and nature required to meet growing demand currently proposed and available. None of these fall within Maidstone, where vacancy rates are currently most constrained, and demand is arguably highest. Based on this, there is an imminent need to increase the quantum of logistics space along the M20 corridor to service demand and drive local economic growth. (Avison Young Economic Needs Assessment – Wates)

A local example is the success of Loc8 located opposite the site in question and referenced by the applicant.

Conclusion:

Not taking any Local Plan policies or landscape designations into consideration the identified site presents a well-placed strategic location within the M20 corridor for logistic uses , complementing Loc8 and other sites in the corridor.

The proposed development could assist in delivering much needed higher value jobs and investment in the Borough and applies to three out of the five Economic Development Strategy priorities and the Corporate Plans Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure' and 'A Thriving Place' priorities.

The proposed development could also produce additional jobs in local supply chains.

The scheme would be well received from the market/occupiers if outline planning consent were granted.

Therefore this outline application is broadly supported by Economic Development.