
PLANNING WORKING GROUP

MINUTES of the Meeting held at the location listed below on Thursday, 20 May 2021 from 10.00 am - 11.20 am.

PRESENT: Councillors Simon Clark, Richard Darby, Mike Dendor, Tim Gibson (Chairman), James Hall, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chairman), Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin, Paul Stephen, Tim Valentine and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Andy Byrne, Philippa Davies, Andrew Jeffers and Kellie MacKenzie.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Monique Bonney, Lee McCall and Mike Whiting.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Cameron Beart, James Hunt, Carole Jackson and David Simmons.

634 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

635 **20/503707/HYBRID, KENT SCIENCE PARK, SHIMMIN ROAD, SITTINGBOURNE, ME9 8BZ**

The Chairman welcomed Members, the Agent, Applicant, officers and members of the public to the meeting.

As it had been a while since a face-to-face Planning Working Group meeting had taken place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Development Manager explained the safety procedures put in place. He asked those in attendance to adhere to Government guidance by wearing face coverings and keeping their distance from each other.

The Area Planning Officer gave an overview of the application. He explained that the application site was beyond the fence line of the existing Kent Science Park (KSP), and although the site was generally rural, KSP was subject to Policy Regen 4 of the Local Plan, which supported growth of the KSP, and this allowed the potential to extend beyond the existing fence line if certain criteria of the policy were met. The application site was 4.83 ha in size and this was a hybrid application. It was made up of a full application for part of the site (plot 2) and outline application for the remainder. The Area Planning Officer said for the full element of the application, the proposed building sat centrally within the site. He explained that the new manufacturing facility was 11,770 sqm in floorspace, with 7,474 sqm 'operational' floor area and a plant-only area of 4,296 sqm. The proposed building was 72 metres in depth and 78 metres in length, and the height was 16.3 metres, with flues up to 20.4 metres. The Area Planning Officer explained the manufacturing use of the building and that it was an expansion to upscale the manufacturing facility already on the site. He gave an overview of the outline

planning application which included approximately 4,500 sqm of floorspace for light industrial, research and development and office use. The Area Planning Officer showed Members where the access road would begin, and this would continue on into a loop out to the other side of the existing building, and connect with other roads within the KSP. There would be a large landscape buffer with land raising, and the new building was set down into the ground, which meant the bund was approximately 7 metres taller than the ground level of the building. The bunding would include a comprehensive planting scheme, and the fencing would be installed on the development-side of the bunding.

The Applicant and Agent were invited to speak on the application. They explained that the landscaping would cover a minimum depth of 25 metres and maximum of 50 metres. They said the land had a natural sloping element to it and it was hoped to replicate this through the bunding and landscaping, to reduce the impact of the new building. There would be dark sky lighting to reduce upwards light pollution, and the offices would project east-west to reduce impact. They confirmed that the new flues would be 300-400 mm in circumference, compared to a metre on the existing chimneys at the KSP. The buildings had been designed in a darker colour to reduce impact.

The Parish Council representative and local resident comments included:

- There must be easier sites for the development to be built on;
- the building should be built within the existing fence line;
- concerned with the height of the building and the flues; and
- contamination issues.

Members were shown plans of the proposals which included the landscape buffer, the proposed buildings, location of the fencing, access roads and cross-sections of the application site.

In response to questions, the Area Planning Officer explained that the buildings under the outline element of the application, shown next to the main building on the submitted plans were part of this application, but would not be able to be occupied until the improvements to increase capacity at junction 5 of the M2 had been completed. When asked, he added that there was the possibility that they might not be built.

The Applicant and Agent responded to questions about odours from the site. They advised that no processes would be carried out which would create new cannabis odours, as the application was for the final stage of the process which did not release odours. Botanical material was extracted on the site, but there were strict regulations in place to control these. They explained that the height of the flues was needed for the final part of the process which tested the pure product at the end of the manufacturing process.

The Area Planning Officer responded to questions about the presence of any contaminants on the land. He said a contaminated land report was submitted with the planning application, and this was reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Team and the Environment Agency, and both were content with the findings.

The Ward Member raised concern with the historic use of the land, and that experimental drugs had been deposited in the land. She also suggested that the applicant used other buildings on site instead of building additional ones. The Ward Member said that it needed to be considered whether this was the right location for the development; she raised transportation issues and said there was no public bus service in operation. She also raised issues of sustainability, and the impact of increased traffic on the rural roads. In response, the Applicant and Agent advised that there was not enough space in their other buildings on the site for the type of use the proposed building was for, and that the site was licensed for this type of use, rather than moving to another location. Boreholes had been sunk as far down as the foundations and no contamination had been found. There would also be a watching brief once the building was in operation to manage any potential contamination issues. Work was ongoing on the bus services and routes, and these could be opened up for public use as well.

The Applicant/Agent explained that GW Pharmaceuticals had been on the site for 23 years, the site was secure, and all necessary licences were already at the site, with all functions of the process in one location. All the other GW units on the site were occupied, and there was not enough room within the site to construct the building within the site boundary.

Members toured other parts of the KSP that were near to the application site.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel