

MC/20/1431

Date Received: 18 June 2020
Location: Land North of Medway Road Gillingham
Medway ME7 1NY
Proposal: Construction of a Food store (Use Class E(a) - Retail) together with associated car and cycle parking, servicing, landscaping, and associated works.
Ward: Gillingham North Ward
Case Officer: Doug Coleman
Contact Number: 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 21st July 2021.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

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

Drawing numbers LD(14)-CS-01 REV 02, LD(14)-CS-02 REV 01, LD(14)-CS-04 REV 01, LD(14)-CS-05 REV 01, LD(14)-CS-06 REV 01, LD(14)-CS-07 REV 01, LD(14)-CS-11 REV 01, LD(14)-DD-01 REV 02, LD(14)-FF-03 REV 01, LD(14)-GF-06 REV 02, LD(14)-GF-09 REV 02, LD(14)-RP 01 REV 01, LD(14)-SG-01 REV 01, PC-03 REV 01, CG-11 REV 02, CG-12 REV 02, ST-410 REV 02, ST-415 REV 02 and ST-430 REV 02) received 7 May 2020; and AD 110_REV G, AD 111_REV B, AD 113_REV B and AD 114_REV H received 18 June 2020.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 The construction works shall be carried out at all times in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) Report Number Gil/CEMP/01 (dated 9 April 2020) received 8 June 2020.

Reason: In order to minimise the impact of the construction period on the amenities of local residents with regard to BNE2 of the Local Plan.

- 4 The use of the development hereby permitted shall not commence until the highway improvements shown on drawing number SCP/18539/003 Rev B have been completed in full.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not prejudice conditions of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policy T1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 No development shall take place until a scheme based on sustainable drainage principles, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority.

The scheme shall include (where applicable):

- i. Details of the design of the scheme (in conjunction with the landscaping plan where applicable).
- ii. A timetable for its implementation (including phased implementation).
- iii. Operational maintenance and management plan including access requirements for each sustainable drainage component.
- iv. Proposed arrangements for future adoption by any public body, statutory undertaker or management company.

The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the agreed scheme.

Reason: Required prior to development to manage surface water during and post construction and for the lifetime of the development as outlined at Paragraph 165 of NPPF.

- 6 Prior to occupation (or within an agreed implementation schedule) a signed verification report carried out by a qualified drainage engineer (or equivalent) must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority to confirm that the agreed surface water system has been constructed as per the agreed scheme and plans. The report shall include details and locations of critical drainage infrastructure (such as inlets, outlets and control structures) including as built drawings, and an operation and maintenance manual for the unadopted parts of the scheme as constructed.

Reason: This condition is sought in accordance with paragraph 165 of the NPPF to ensure that suitable surface water drainage scheme is designed and fully implemented so as to not increase flood risk onsite or elsewhere.

- 7 No development shall take place until details of a Construction Surface Water Management Plan (CSWMP) detailing how surface water and storm water will be managed on the site during construction (including demolition and site clearance operations) is submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the LLFA. The CSWMP shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved plan for the duration of construction.

The approved CSWMP and shall include method statements, scaled and dimensioned plans and drawings detailing surface water management proposals to include:

- i. Temporary drainage systems.
- ii. Measures for managing pollution / water quality and protecting controlled waters and watercourses.
- iii. Measures for managing any on or offsite flood risk associated with

The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: Required prior to development to manage surface water during and post construction and for the lifetime of the development as outlined at Paragraph 165 of NPPF.

- 8 All materials used externally shall match those set out in 18002 - External Building Finishes Schedule - Lidl, Gillingham, SAS SF52 Curtain Wall Systems brochure, DorSuite Secure Suite Specification Guide; and drawing numbers LD(14)-DD-01 REV 01 and LD(14)-SG-01 REV 01 received 29 May 2020; and LD(14)-CS-11 Rev 02 received 30 June 2020.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 9 The boundary treatment shall be completed in accordance with the approved details (drawing number AD 114_REV H received 18 June 2020) prior to the first use of the development and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not prejudice conditions of visual amenity in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 10 The development herein approved shall not be occupied until the area shown on drawing number AD 110_REV G received 18 June 2020 as vehicle parking space has been provided, surfaced and drained. Thereafter it shall be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order) shall be carried out on the land so shown or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access to this reserved parking space.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate accommodation for the parking is likely to lead to hazardous on-street parking and in accordance with Policies T1 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 11 The Travel Plan Ref: JRB/18539/TP01C (dated June 2020) received 18 June 2020 shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the development and maintained for 5 years post completion of the development.

Reason: To ensure the sustainable transport objective related to the development of this site and to reduce potential impact on the surrounding area in accordance with Policy T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 12 Prior to the installation of any external lighting on the site, details of such lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include height, position, external appearance, any shielding, light intensity, colour, spillage (such as light contour or lux level plans showing the existing and proposed levels) and hours of use together with a report to demonstrate its effect on nearby residential properties and of how this effect has been minimised. Any external lighting shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to limit the impact of the lighting on the nearby residents and with regard to Policies BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

- 13 The development herein approved shall not be occupied until details of the refuse storage arrangements, including provision for the storage of recyclable materials, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. the development shall be occupied until the approved refuse storage arrangements for that building are in place and all approved storage arrangements shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure a satisfactory provision for refuse and recycling in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 14 If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, no further development shall take place until a method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Method Statement must detail how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved Method Statement.

Reason: To ensure that the development is undertaken in a manner which acknowledges interests of amenity and safety in accordance with Policy BNE23 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 15 The proposed curtain wall glazing shown on the approved plan (drawing number AD 113_REV B received 18 June 2020 to be clear glazed shall be retained as such and shall not be replaced by obscure glazing or panels or any other such device that would prevent or obscure views into the retail unit.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 16 No development above slab level shall take place above ground floor slab level until details of the provision of 4 electric vehicle charging points along with a parking management plan to increase the number of charging points required to 10 after three years have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include the location, charging type (power output and charging speed), associated infrastructure and timetable for installation. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be maintained.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability in accordance with paragraph 110E of National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

- 17 Notwithstanding the approved plans, no development above slab level shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works, a timetable for implementation and a landscape management plan, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Landscape Management Plan shall include management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas for a minimum period of five years; and any trees or plants which within 5 years of planting are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance and provision for landscaping in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

- 18 No commercial goods shall be loaded, unloaded, stored or otherwise handled and no vehicles shall arrive or depart, within the application site outside the hours 07:00 to 21:00 Monday to Saturday and 08:00 to 18:00 on Sunday and Public Holidays.

These hours hereby permitted shall be discontinued 12 months after the building herein approved has been occupied and after this period no commercial goods shall be loaded, unloaded, stored or otherwise handled and no vehicles shall arrive or depart, within the application site outside the hours 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 18:00 Saturday or at any time on Sunday or Public Holidays

Reason: To allow the Local Planning Authority an opportunity to assess the effect of the permitted development on the amenities of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 19 The development herein approved shall not be occupied until details of the means to prevent unauthorised parking within the adjacent site to the east, The Walnut Tree Club, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the approved means have been installed and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To regulate and control unauthorised parking within the adjacent site at The Walnut Club, in the interests of amenity in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 20 No development above slab level shall take place until details of ecological enhancement measures have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved shall be provided before the building is occupied and shall thereafter be maintained.

Reason: In the interests of ecology and in accordance with the provisions set out under Policies BNE37, BNE38 and BNE39 Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 21 The close boarded acoustic fence shall be erected around the external plant with a minimum mass of 10kg/m² in accordance with Reflective Sound Screens BS EN 1793-2: 1998 by Hales Sawmills Ltd; and the Fence Location Plan received 7 May 2020. The fence shall be completed before the development is brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect nearby noise sensitive receptors from noise arising from the plant and in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan.

- 22 No more than 20% of the net sales area of the unit herein approved shall be used for the sale of comparison goods and at no time shall more than 3,500 individual lines of goods be sold from the retail unit hereby permitted.

Reason: To safeguard the vitality and viability of existing retail centres and having regard to Policy R13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and Paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

- 23 The use of the development hereby permitted shall not commence until the details of a mechanism for off-site planting have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include a contribution towards off site planting and a timescale for the carrying out and maintenance of the planting.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policies BNE1 and BNE6 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 24 The use of the development hereby permitted shall not commence until a Service Delivery Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Service Delivery Plan shall include details of the number, frequency and times of deliveries and collections from the premises and the noise impact. The use shall operate in accordance with the approved Service Delivery Plan.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not prejudice conditions of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Policies BNE2 and T1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 25 No development shall take place above slab level until an Air Quality Emissions Mitigation Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Statement shall be prepared in accordance with the Medway Air Quality Planning Guidance and shall specify the measures that will be implemented as part of the development to mitigate the air quality impacts identified in the apQuality Assessment Ref: AQ_assessment/2019/Lidl_MedwayRd (dated 4 June 2020). The total monetary value of the mitigation to be provided shall be demonstrated to be equivalent to, or greater than, the total damage cost values calculated as part of the approved Air Quality Assessment. The development shall be implemented, and thereafter maintained, entirely in accordance with the measures set out in the approved Mitigation Statement.

Reason: Required prior to commencement of development to ensure the adequate protection of health and amenity of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy BNE24 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 26 The proposed E(a) Use (Retail) hereby permitted shall remain in that use and no other Class E uses within Schedule 2, Part A, Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) shall be carried out unless planning permission has been granted on an application relating thereto.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control such development in the interests of neighbouring and occupier amenity in accordance with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This application seeks permission for a food store (Class E(a) – Retail) with a retail floor area of approx. 1,669 sq. m. measuring approx. 58m by approx. 24m, including ancillary servicing and storage areas. The proposed building would have a mono-pitched roof rising from approx. 5.9m at the north side (rear) of the building to approx. 7.5m towards the south side (front) of the building. To the front of the building would be a single storey flat roof projection, approx. 4.5m in height, above the entrance into the store and trolley storage area.

The proposed building would be white rendered, with a grey plinth beneath. The entrance would be at the south-western corner and would be glass. The glass would continue along most of the west elevation, with the remaining elevations being rendered. The scheme would include illustrative display panels on the north and south elevations to add more interest to the building.

Both pedestrian and vehicular access would be achieved off Medway Road at the point where there is an existing access. This would be widened to a width of approx. 9m with footpaths on either side. 96 car parking spaces are shown including 6 disabled parking spaces and 8 parent and child spaces and 4 spaces provided with an electric charging station as shown on drawing number AD 110_REV G received 18 June 2020.

Application MC/19/1875 was previously determined to grant planning permission, however following determination the decision was legally challenged. As a result of that legal challenge, the planning permission granted under MC/19/1875 was quashed by a consent order agreed by all parties and dated 27 July 2020.

Given the uncertainty regarding timescales for the court decision regarding the consent order for MC/19/1875, the applicant chose to submit the duplicate application MC/20/1431 on 18 June 2020. This application MC/20/1431 was presented to Planning Committee on 19 August 2020 and following deferral to the Secretary of State for a decision on whether the development constituted EIA development, a decision was issued by the Council of approval with conditions was issued on 7 October 2020.

Following the consent order being agreed on 27 July 2020 application MC/19/1875 became a live application again and was subsequently presented to Planning Committee on 16 September 2020. A decision of Approval with Conditions was issued on 17 September 2020.

Following the granting of planning permission for MC/20/1431 and the regranting of planning permission MC/19/1875, the decisions were legally challenged. As a result of that legal challenge, planning permission granted under MC/19/1875 and MC/20/1431 were quashed by a consent order agreed by all parties. The consent order to quash planning permission granted under MC/19/1875 and MC/20/1431 has now been finalised and issued by the High Court (dated 25 January 2021).

Again, given the uncertainty regarding timescales for the court decision regarding the consent order for MC/19/1875 and MC/20/1431, the applicant chose to submit the duplicate application MC/20/3077 on 30 November 2020. Application MC/20/3077 was presented to Planning Committee on 3 February 2021 and a decision was issued by the Council of approval with conditions was issued on 5 February 2021. However, following determination the decision was legally challenged on the basis, in summary, that the Council had misconstrued national policy and guidance on the application of the sequential test set out in the parts of the NPPF which apply to flood risk. The judge at a hearing on 24 June 2021 considered that the claim was arguable and granted permission for it to proceed to a full hearing.

This application, MC/20/1431, was previously determined to grant planning permission and was quashed by a consent order agreed by all parties and dated 25 January 2021. This application is therefore now live and presented to Planning Committee for determination. This application is also supported by a revised Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Doc Ref: CW/190320/FRA/RevD (dated April 2021) which applies, as an alternative, an approach to flood risk applying the interpretation as advanced by the claimant in the current High Court litigation.

Relevant Planning History

MC/20/3077	Construction of a Food store (Use Class E(a) - Retail) together with associated car and cycle parking, servicing, landscaping, and associated works. Approved with Conditions on 5 February but subsequently is in the process of Judicial Review
MC/20/1431	Construction of a Food store (Use Class A1 - Retail) together with associated car and cycle parking, servicing, landscaping, and associated works. Approved with Conditions on 7 October 2020 but subsequently quashed by consent order on 25 January 2021
MC/19/1875	Construction of a Food store (Use Class A1 - Retail) together with associated car and cycle parking, servicing, landscaping, and associated works. Approved with Conditions 3 April 2020 but decision subsequently quashed by consent order dated 27 July 2020. Then Approved with Conditions 17 September 2020, but subsequently is in the process of being quashed by consent order again
MC/07/2273	Construction of car showroom with service workshop, car valeting facilities & mezzanine office over also car parking & vehicle display area. Decision: Refused Decided: 7 March 2008
MC/03/0233	Construction of car showroom and workshop with associated wash down, car parking and vehicle display area (demolition of building) Decision: Approved Decided: 19 March 2003

Representations

Given the timeframe between the previous applications and the current application MC/20/1431, it was considered relevant to include the consultation responses for all three planning applications.

Consultation Responses to application MC/19/1875

With reference to the previous application MC/19/1875, the application was advertised on site and in the press as a major development and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

7 letters were received, including **2 letters on behalf of ASDA** objecting for the following reasons:

- No need for more supermarkets in Medway.
- There are empty shops in High Street which should be used instead.
- Proposal would generate additional traffic.
- HGVs will have difficulty turning into site and would block traffic.
- If on street parking is removed to facilitate the development, this would impact on parking elsewhere.
- A safe pedestrian crossing.
- No details as to how the car park will be managed.
- Noise and disturbance to local residents from activity on site, particularly when deliveries are taking place and at night.
- Adverse impact on police station.
- Question viability of the proposal.
- The proposed store should be located in Chatham not Gillingham.

28 letters were received making the following comments in support of the application.

- There is a need for Lidl in Medway.
- Proposal would positively contribute to regeneration of the locality.
- Proposal would create jobs.
- A new supermarket in this location will be popular with residents and students.
- 98 parking spaces should be sufficient for customers.
- Site would be accessible for local residents on foot.
- Local people would not have to travel to other shopping centres.

- There is a need for Lidl store in Medway.
- Proposal would increase consumer choice.
- The site is an eyesore and need development.
- Site is located on a bus route.

2 letters were received neither supporting nor objecting to the application but making the following comments

- Access to adjoining sports club must be retained.
- Development would be easily accessible by bicycle.
- The Transport Assessment does not take account of the speed of traffic using local roads.
- Insufficient traffic monitoring data.
- Traffic calming measures required.
- It's disappointing that the existing boundary fence is to remain.

A letter was received from **Gillingham Town Centre Forum** making the following comments:

- Express disappointment that the development is to be located away from the town centre and would have preferred this to be located at the Britton Farm Mall site.
- However, they accept that a different development is now taking place at that site and it is not available.
- Scheme has benefit of regenerating area and would draw people to Gillingham.
- Consideration should be given to encouraging feeder trade to the High Street so that High Street benefits from the store. Every opportunity should incentivise visitors to High Street – car park incentives, shuttle services (resurrecting old tram route), cycling and pedestrian provision.

KCC's Biodiversity Officer commented that sufficient ecological information has been provided but requests conditions relating to the control of Japanese Knotweed and ecological enhancements, and an informative regarding the protection of breeding birds.

A letter was received on behalf of **Tesco** raising the following concerns:

- Even though the development falls below the 2,500 sq. m. threshold for a retail impact assessment specified in Paragraph 89 of the NPPF, the Council has not had regard to the retail impact of the proposal having regard to Policy R13 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 90 of the NPPF.
- The Council has not had regard to comments in the recent draft Local Plan and the Gillingham Masterplan.
- The proposal would impact upon established retail facilities in Gillingham town centre.
- The applicant and the Council have failed to properly apply the sequential test.
- The sequential test has not considered Rochester or Strood and does not take into account preferable out of centre sites.

- The report fails to identify the net sales area or the breakdown between convenience or comparison goods.
- No conditions are recommended controlling the extent of floorspace or goods to be sold.
- Tesco say that if these matters are not addressed the probity of any decision must be called into question.

The applicant had submitted the following comments in response to the letter of representation by Tesco:

- Tesco has 6 months to comment on the application but waited until the day before the Committee. This is an unacceptable tactic.
- In terms of retail impact Paragraph 89 is clear in that a retail impact assessment should only be required, in the absence of a locally set threshold, if the gross floorspace is over 2,500 sq. m. The proposed development is well below this threshold meaning an impact assessment is not required. The letter quotes Paragraph 90 saying that where an application is likely to have a significant adverse impact it should be refused. In setting the threshold at 2,500 sq. m. the Secretary of State does not believe that stores smaller than 2,500 sq. m. are likely to have a significant adverse impact. The applicant quotes a recent High Court judgement (*Asda v Leeds City Council* 20 December 2019) where an impact assessment had indicated a significant impact but the planning permission was granted. Asda challenged the decision and argued that NPPF paragraph 90 provides a presumption against granting permission, and essentially mandates refusal. The Court disagreed saying that the NPPF has to be read as a whole and that while the term 'presumption' is used in paragraphs 11-14 in relation to sustainable development, and a structure set out by which it is to be applied, the word is not used in paragraph 90, which contains no suggestion that a 'tilted balance' should be applied. There is no mandatory requirement for the application to be refused on impact grounds. The likelihood of a significant adverse impact on existing centres is a material consideration that should be weighed against the benefits of bringing a brownfield site back in to economic use, improving choice and competition for local food shoppers and creating up to 40 new jobs for local people; the Secretary of State's guidance suggesting that developments of less than 2,500sq m gross are unlikely to result in significant impact; and the proposed development being 800sq m below the impact threshold.
- With regard to the sequential test, this was conducted on the basis of the development being a Limited Assortment Discount (LAD) food store to serve the local catchment of Gillingham/Chatham, which is consistent with the judgement in *Aldergate Properties v Mansfield District Council* (July 2016) that sequential assessments should relate to the broad type of development being proposed (in this case a deep discount food store) rather than the requirements of the individual retailer. A search was made for sites within or on the edge of existing centres, and additional information later provided in an addendum to address points raised by your policy team. No sites have

been identified that are both suitable and available to accommodate the proposal. The comment that a wider catchment should be adopted pays no regard to the operational characteristics of LADs which serve as local neighbourhood stores for much smaller catchments than mainstream retailers.

- So far as the size and type of store is concerned, the proposal is for a LAD foodstore, with the format and layout obviously tailored to the applicant's specifications. The net sales space will be broken down into 80% convenience goods and 20% comparison, and the applicant has no objection to a condition restrict the store to that mix.
- Tesco's letter does not raise any material issues that you have not already satisfactorily addressed the report and all relevant material considerations have been assessed.

Consultation Responses to application MC/20/3077

With reference to application MC/20/3077, the application had been advertised on site and in the press and by individual neighbour notification letters to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Natural England had no comments to make.

KCC's Biodiversity Officer commented that sufficient ecological information has been provided but requests conditions relating to the ecological enhancements, and an informative regarding the protection of breeding birds.

1 letter received objecting for the following reasons:

- Highways impact on residents' access to local roads

8 letters were received making the following comments in support of the application:

- A new supermarket in this location will be popular with residents and students.
- Highly desirable improvement
- Bring land back into use
- Not an overdevelopment of site
- Need for increased retail
- Benefit to other local businesses
- Employment opportunities
- Within walking distance
- EV Charging points
- Good existing access
- Served by bus route

1 letter was received neither supporting nor objecting to the application but making the following comments:

- the DfT's cycle design vehicle has a width of 1.2m the proposed access is too narrow. It should be an absolute minimum of 1.5m.
- Additional letter has been received from the applicant. A copy of the letter is appended.

Consultation Responses to the current application MC/20/1431

With reference to this application MC/20/1431, the application was advertised on site and in the press and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Natural England has no comments to make.

KCC's Biodiversity Officer commented that sufficient ecological information has been provided but requests conditions relating to the ecological enhancements, and an informative regarding the protection of breeding birds.

A letter was received **on behalf of ASDA** objecting for the following reasons:

- Asda have not received a response to matters raised in the second legal challenge by Asda, namely Ground 3 - Unlawful application of the sequential test and / or failure to provide reasons; and Ground 4 - Unlawful approach to Policy R13 of the Development Plan.
- The updated Planning & Retail Statement still fails to assess the cumulative impacts of the proposed development.
- Asda should be able to see how matters raised in the second legal challenge have been considered in the determination of the duplicate application.
- Asda should also be afforded the opportunity to follow proceedings and address the Planning Committee directly.
- The site should not be classified as Flood Zone 1 or an area with low flood risk. The duplication application must be refused owing to flood risk and the lack of a sequential test and consideration of the exception test.

The applicant had submitted the following comments in response to the letter of representation **on behalf of ASDA**:

- The retail impact and sequential test issues have previously been responded to, including in the Planning & Retail Statement submitted with the MC/20/1431 application.
- The flood risk statement submitted with MC/19/1875 was not challenged or queried.
- The imprecise nature of the Environment Agency's map means that it cannot be interpreted down to the level of individual pixels and it cannot have been their intention to suggest that the Zone 2 designation extends

into the application site, as the section of Pier Road that is within Flood Zone 2 is 1.5-2m below the level of the site.

- The potential for any surface water on the road to spill over on to the application site is close to zero – Pier Road would have to be flooded to a depth of 2m before the application site would be at any risk.
- Advice has been sought from Queens Counsel (QC) who has confirmed that the impact and sequential tests have been satisfactorily addressed and that the objections raised by Asda have no planning merit. This QC written opinion has been formally submitted to officers in support of the application.

Following the quashing of the MC/20/1431 planning permission on 21 January 2021, the application is subsequently live again. A revised Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Doc Ref: CW/190320/FRA/RevD (dated April 2021) was submitted on 20 April 2020 and a 21-day consultation was issued.

3 letters of support have been received outlining the following:

- The community has grown
- Limited food stores
- No flood risks
- Allow choice

Southern Water raise no objection to the proposed foul drainage. Guidance on surface water retaining or conveying features and public sewers, oil/petrol spillages and oil trap gullies or petrol/oil interceptors, and groundwater/ land drainage and public sewers has been provided. Their records indicate that a decommissioned surface water sewer is crossing the development site. If found during construction works, this apparatus will have to be relocated/removed under Section 185 of the Water Industry Act.

SGN provided plans and guidance on works near gas mains and Safe digging practices.

UK Power Network has provided records which show the electrical lines and/or electrical plant and a fact sheet which contains important information regarding the use of their plans and working around their equipment.

ESP Utilities Group Limited has provided guidance on gas pipes, locating gas pipes, safe working practices, works near gas mains and Safe digging practices, and has outlined when ESP Utilities Group must be consulted.

Natural England raise no objection, the proposed amendments to the original application are unlikely to have significantly different impacts on the natural environment than the original proposal.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background

This application (MC/20/1431) and 2 other applications (MC/19/1875 and MC/20/3077) for a LAD food store at this application site have previously been granted planning permission. However, following a challenge by judicial review of MC/19/1875 and MC/20/1431, the parties involved in that challenge agreed a consent order that the planning permissions be quashed on a ground relating to the officer's report failing to refer Members of the Planning Committee to any Policies related to flood risk that were relevant to the applications. The consent order to quash planning permission granted under MC/19/1875 and MC/20/1431 has now been finalised and issued by the High Court (dated 25 January 2021) and they are live applications again.

Given the uncertainty regarding timescales for the court decision with regard to the consent order, the applicant chose to submit a duplicate application MC/20/3077, to address the issues raised regarding flood risk. However, following determination the decision was legally challenged. This matter was listed for an oral renewal hearing at the High Court on 24 June 2021. The Judge granted permission to the claimant to bring a claim for judicial review, on the basis, in summary, that the Council had misconstrued national policy and guidance on the application of the sequential test set out in the parts of the NPPF and NPPG which apply to flood risk, and in any event had not carried out a sequential approach by not considering whether there were reasonably available alternative sites in areas at less risk of flooding of any type (including surface water flooding). Those proceedings are awaiting final determination and are therefore still live and on-going (a matter which is addressed below).

By way of engagement, the previous application MC/19/1875 was the subject of a presentation to Members when the quashed permission was reported to committee on 16 September 2020, while this application MC/20/1431 had been reported to the 19 August 2020 committee. The applicant also engaged in a public consultation exercise with local residents with flyers sent to local households and businesses as part of application MC/19/1875.

This application (MC/20/1431) has been screened under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and a formal screening opinion issued by the Secretary of State that confirms the proposed development does not require an environmental impact assessment. The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 and falls below the thresholds and criteria in Schedule 2: 10(b) urban development projects of the 2017 EIA Regulations. The size and nature of the development, together with

the location of the site and its limited ecological value, means the development is not expected to result in an adverse impact on the environment, either alone or cumulatively with other development.

This application (MC/20/1431) is now live again and to address the issues raised regarding flood risk the applicants have submitted a revised Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Doc Ref: CW/190320/FRA/RevD (dated April 2021) for consideration.

Principle

The site is within the urban area, but outside the core retail area and not within an area allocated for retail or any other use on the Proposals Map to the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Policy R13 of the Local Plan relates to retail development outside of the main retail centres and requires such proposals to apply a sequential approach. Policy R13 of the Local Plan states that retail development outside the main retail centres will only be permitted when it is demonstrated that sites suitable for the proposed retail development are not available in accordance with the following sequence:

- (i) within the Core Areas of Chatham, Strood, Gillingham and Rainham; then
- (ii) on the edge (i.e. within 200-300 metres) of the core Areas of Chatham, Strood, Gillingham and Rainham; then
- (iii) within or adjacent to one of the Local Centres, Village and Neighbourhood Centres as listed in policy R10.

Development will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- (iv) the extent to which the proposal would undermine the strategy and objectives of the local plan to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing centres; and
- (v) whether the scale and type of retailing by itself, or cumulatively with other proposals, would have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the Core Areas, Local Centres, Villages or Neighbourhood Centres; and
- (vi) whether the location enables access by a choice of transport, including public transport.
- (vii) the overall impact on travel, the likely changes in travel patterns and reduction in the reliance on the car.

The sequential approach to the siting of town centre uses is also supported in the current NPPF at paragraph 86, which states that Local Planning Authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a

reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities.

Paragraph 011 of the NPPG (Reference ID: 2b-011-20190722) also states how the sequential test should be used in decision-making. It goes on to provide a checklist that sets out the considerations that should be taken into account in determining whether a proposal complies with the sequential test. Lastly, in line with paragraph 86 of the NPPF, paragraph 011 of the NPPG (Reference ID: 2b-011-20190722) states only if suitable sites in town centre or edge of centre locations are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered. When considering what a reasonable period is for this purpose, the scale and complexity of the proposed scheme and of potentially suitable town or edge of centre sites should be taken into account.

The Sequential Test

A Sequential Test was included within the Planning and Retail Statement. This was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 86 of the NPPF and the appropriate Planning Practice Guidance – Town Centres and Retail which states that *use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations.*

The sequential test looked at the following sites within the retail areas of Gillingham and Chatham:

- Former Budgens, Brittan Farm Mall, High Street, Gillingham
- Land off Jeffery Street, Gillingham
- Pentagon Shopping Centre, Chatham
- Land at Richard Street / Best Street, Chatham
- Trafalgar Centre, High Street, Chatham
- Land bound by High Street, Waterfront Way and Medway Street, Chatham
- Queen Street and Slicketts Hill Car Park, Chatham

Each of these sites were assessed in terms of their suitability, accessibility, availability and viability in accordance the aforementioned guidance. Looking at each of these sites in turn and summarising the assessment's conclusion on each site:

Former Budgens, Brittan Farm Mall, High Street, Gillingham.

This site was neither suitable nor available. The site had been vacant since 2016 and the unit, in its current form is unfit for purpose and could not be used without comprehensive redevelopment. In considering some of the documents/assessment which form the evidence base to the new Local Plan. The North Kent SHENA prepared in 2016 provides recommendations for all retail centres in Medway. In section 10.42 of Volume 1 – Main Report, it states the above average performance of existing food stores within the Gillingham area and advises of the need for a foodstore-led development at the former Budgens site in the High Street as well as further food store provision in the Gillingham area. However, since the SHENA the former Budgens

site has not come forward for retail development but for other development. There has been a recent grant of planning permission (MC/19/0825) for a mixed Class B1/D1 scheme. The applicant has also added that work had now commenced on the development of this site and it is, therefore, not available.

Land off Jeffery Street, Gillingham.

This site comprises an irregular area of land to rear of properties in High Street. It comprises several car parks and a former pub, the Dog and Bone, which has the benefit of planning permission for a retail development (MC/18/2448). As it is still partly in use and would require land assembly it is currently not available and due to its irregular shape not suitable.

Pentagon Shopping Centre, Chatham.

The majority of the centre is occupied and vacant units within the centre would individually be too small and sufficient floorspace could only be achieved through the amalgamation of existing units. No plans have come forward for the expansion of the centre and it is currently neither suitable nor available.

Land at Richard Street/Best Street, Chatham.

This site is allocated in the Local Plan for retail development (principally for comparison goods with ancillary Class A2 and A3 uses. There have been previous planning permissions for retail development, but no schemes have come forward. The majority of the site is used as a car park, but there is also a car rental outlet and NHS facility. The site is in multiple ownership and unlikely to come forward within a reasonable time period and as such is not available.

Trafalgar Centre, High Street, Chatham.

The Trafalgar Centre has been vacant since 2014 and with a floorspace of 1,920 sq. m. would be able to accommodate the food store. However, significant modification to the building would be required and the site would not be able to accommodate the parking and servicing arrangements necessary for the development and in this regard is not considered suitable.

Land bound by High Street, Waterfront Way and Medway Street, Chatham.

This site is currently in use, occupied by Argos and its car park. It is allocated for retail in the Local Plan and identified as a potential development opportunity in the North Kent SHENA (2016) for 'other town centre' uses with residential on the upper floors. However, there are no proposals to bring this site forward and it is currently not available.

Queen Street and Slickets Hill Car Park, Chatham.

This approx. 0.71-hectare site is located to the north east of Chatham town centre (outside the core retail area) and is bound by The Brook, Queen Street, Slickets Hill and Cross Street. The site is defined as an edge of centre site but is separated from the core retail area by a major distributor route.

Outline planning permission was granted for a mixed retail (Classes A1 and A2) and residential scheme on 21 April 2010 (reference MC/09/2626). The outline scheme proposed 1,350 sq. m. retail floorspace, with a further 2,080 sq. m. of flexible floorspace plus 118 residential units.

In terms of the retail floorspace previously permitted, although only in outline, the Planning Statement submitted in support of the planning application identified that this would comprise a larger anchor unit (1,350 square metres) together with 2,025 square metres of flexible retail space. However, there was no end user identified.

The site has been cleared but since permission was granted in 2010 no reserved matters application has been submitted. The outline permission has now expired and in this regard a retail unit on this site is not available.

Whilst the quantum retail floorspace previously permitted could accommodate the broad level of floorspace proposed for Medway Road, the nature and constraints associated with delivering retail and commercial floorspace in this location means that this site would not be suitable for the application proposal. The land, due to its topography and difficulty in providing service and delivery arrangements from the Brook would have a potential adverse impact on highway safety and free flow of traffic and as such the site would not be suitable for the nature of the proposal and the prospective tenant.

Furthermore, the limited site area means that any parking that could be provided would be very limited. The permitted scheme (MC/09/2626) included only 10 spaces to serve the retail units. Such parking provision would be insufficient to meet the requirements of a Limited Assortment Discount (LAD) food retailer.

Since the consideration and determination of the outline planning application MC/09/2626, the site has been assessed as part of the Local Plan process. It is currently identified in the SLAA as suitable for residential only. In addition, the Chatham Town Centre Masterplan 2019 (CTCM) has been developed in support of the Local Plan, having now been published and forming part of the evidence base. The CTCM updates the Council's position in terms of uses from the previous Chatham Centre and Waterfront Development Brief 2008 and identifies this site and other sites along this side of The Brook, as being suitable for housing. There is no reference to retail for the site in this document. It is therefore unlikely that any proposals for retail development (either in isolation or part of a mixed-use scheme) coming forward at this site will be supported by the Council.

Furthermore, the Council as landowner have entered into a joint venture agreement with a developer to redevelop the land for residential apartments and a planning application has been submitted under reference MC/20/2782 for 179 apartments in 4 blocks. This planning application was reported to Planning Committee on 31 March 2021 where there was a resolution to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a s106 Agreement and the assessment of a Highway Safety Audit (with any concerns resulting in the application being reported back to Planning Committee).

Accordingly, it is considered that this site is neither suitable nor available to accommodate a LAD food store.

Conclusions on matters of principle and sequential test.

The application is not located within a core retail area, nor within any other area allocated for retail use. The Sequential Test included within the Planning and Retail Statement has been considered having regard to the provisions of (i) – (iii) of Policy R13 of the Local Plan, and Paragraphs 80 and 86 of the NPPF as well as the QC advice submitted by the applicant in support of the application.

It is considered that the identified sites within the retail areas of Gillingham and Chatham have been appropriately assessed and it is concluded that there is no suitable site within core retail areas of Gillingham or Chatham that would be suitable for the development proposed.

The Need for a Retail Impact Assessment

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that when assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace). This should include assessment of:

- a) the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).

Paragraph 015 of the NPPG (Reference ID: 2b-015-20190722) also provides guidance on when the impact test should be used. It states that the impact test only applies to proposals exceeding 2,500 square metres gross of floorspace unless a different locally appropriate threshold is set by the local planning authority. In setting a locally appropriate threshold it will be important to consider the:

- scale of proposals relative to town centres
- the existing viability and vitality of town centres
- cumulative effects of recent developments
- whether local town centres are vulnerable
- likely effects of development on any town centre strategy
- impact on any other planned investment

As a guiding principle, impact should be assessed on a like-for-like basis in respect of that particular sector (e.g. it may not be appropriate to compare the impact of an out of centre DIY store with small scale town-centre stores as they would normally not compete directly). Retail uses tend to compete with their most comparable competitive facilities. Conditions may be attached to appropriately control the impact of a particular use.

Where wider town centre developments or investments are in progress, it will also be appropriate to assess the impact of relevant applications on that investment. Key considerations will include:

- the policy status of the investment (i.e. whether it is outlined in the Development Plan)
- the progress made towards securing the investment (for example if contracts are established)
- the extent to which an application is likely to undermine planned developments or investments based on the effects on current/forecast turnovers, operator demand and investor confidence

In setting the default threshold at 2,500sq m gross in paragraph 89 of the NPPF and paragraph 015 of the NPPG (Reference ID: 2b-015-20190722), it suggests that it is considered that retail units smaller than 2,500sqm are unlikely to have a significant adverse impact. If this were not the intention, it would seem pointless to have set a scale of development that should not require an impact assessment.

The current Local Plan does not state a threshold and given that the Local Plan was adopted in 2003 consideration must be given as to the weight that should be afforded to its retail policies, in particular Policy R13 of the Local Plan. Paragraph 213 of the NPPF states:

“However, existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to the degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).”

As outlined above, the Local Plan does not provide a locally set floorspace threshold which would require the need for a formal Retail Impact Assessment. Therefore, default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace and in these circumstances the submission of Retail Impact Assessment is not a requirement. Additionally, paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 89, it should be refused. It does not say in the absence of an impact assessment the application should be refused.

In these circumstances, although Policy R13 of the Local Plan was adopted in 2003, it is not considered wholly out of date. This Policy does not state that a formal Retail Impact Assessment should be submitted, however it does outline that development will be assessed in accordance with a specific criteria, which is considered to broadly conform with paragraph 89 of the NPPF and paragraph 015 of the NPPG (Reference ID: 2b-015-20190722). Therefore, due weight should be given to Policy R13 of the Local Plan in assessing retail impact.

Retail Impact Assessment

Design, Scale and Visual Impact

Policies S4 and BNE1 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 124 and 127 of the NPPF supports high quality development with landscape mitigation where appropriate.

The character of the area is varied with predominantly residential development to the south and commercial development to the north. Immediately to the west of the site is the Walnut Tree Club, a part single/part two storey mid twentieth century building within a large car park, which is accessed via the application site. To the south is part two storey/part three storey building, Compass House used as student accommodation. To the east of Compass House, on the opposite side of Richmond Road, is a mosque.

Immediately to the east of the site, is an embankment to the former dockyard railway, whilst to the north, on the opposite side of Pier Road (A289) is a wooded area, beyond which is Asda petrol station and car park.

The application site has two frontages. The Medway Road frontage (south) is proposed as the more active frontage with the entrance facing this way. Although there is an adopted public footpath along this frontage, it has become overgrown and is currently not useable. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site would be via Medway Road. The proposed building would be set back into the site beyond the carpark. It would be low rise and not unduly prominent when viewed from the Medway Road street scene.

The proposed building would be located closer to the Pier Road (north) frontage. The land level varies across the site rising to a maximum of approx. 1.5m above the highway of Pier Road at the eastern end, adjacent to the embankment. The Pier Road frontage is currently defined by a close-boarded fence at the western end of the frontage and by a rising retaining wall to the east with railings on top. This retaining wall is to be retained under the proposed development.

Due to the constraints of the site it is difficult to alter the layout. The existing access to the site is via Medway Road and will be retained. Vehicular access cannot be obtained via Pier Road due to the variation in levels and the fact that it would be unacceptable in highway terms. Although there is a pedestrian footpath along the Pier Road frontage, it is little used. The majority of people using the store, both by car and on foot, are likely to come from the south.

Careful consideration has been given to the Pier Road frontage, as it is onto a main distributor route. As originally proposed under MC/19/1875, the building would have presented a blank wall to the Pier Road frontage. Concerns in this regard were raised with the applicant and changes sought to address this and enhance the appearance of the development when viewed from Pier Road. It is recognised that there are going to be difficulties designing a building with active frontages that also responds to the

requirements of the use where a significant amount of storage and shelving is required internally. Although the rear elevation (Pier Road frontage) does not have any windows, the scheme was amended under MC/19/1875 to include two large display panels measuring approx. 4.5m in height and approx. 5.5m in width to add interest to an otherwise blank elevation, these amendments have been reflected in the current application MC/20/1431. Finally, hedge planting is proposed along the Pier Road frontage to soften the impact of the building.

Whilst the principle of a hedge along this frontage has been agreed with the applicant careful consideration will have to be given to the choice of species, having regard to the width of the planting strip and that being on the north side of the building it is likely to be in shadow for a considerable part of the day and therefore unlikely to establish. A condition is therefore recommended requiring the submission and approval of a detailed landscaping scheme. This condition would apply to the whole site not just the Pier Road frontage. A condition is also recommended requiring the submission of drawings of planting and any lighting.

The proposal is supported by plans showing building details at varying scales, along with details of the proposed materials which would be condition as part of any forthcoming planning permission.

In summary, careful consideration has been given to the design of the proposal, particularly the north elevation, and it is considered that having regard to the nature of the site and its overall appearance, the amended scheme would be acceptable in and accord with Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan and Paragraphs 124 and 127 of the NPPF.

Amenity

Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan states that development should protect those amenities enjoyed by nearby properties with regard to but not limited to loss of sunlight, daylight, outlook and privacy; as well as disturbance caused by noise, light, activity levels and traffic generation.

The nearest residential property is the Kent Student Accommodation to the south, approx. 20m from the boundary of the site and approx. 60m from the proposed retail unit itself. In view of this distance, it is considered that there would be no detrimental impact on neighbouring residential amenities in terms of loss of daylight, sunlight, outlook or privacy. However, there is potential for there to be an impact of amenities in terms of noise, light, activity levels and traffic generation.

In considering the previous application (MC/19/1875) concerns were raised by Members regarding the proposed delivery hours being excessive. A noise impact assessment Ref: 7806/FD/JA/BL (dated 5 June 2020) received 18 June 2020 has been undertaken which demonstrates that deliveries restricted to 0700-2300 hours would be acceptable, with the internal noise within the nearest noise sensitive properties expected to be 4dB lower than the British Standard guidelines. Conditions are proposed to restrict hours to 0700-2100 Monday to Saturday and 0800-1800 on Sunday and Public Holidays. It is also proposed that these hours be conditioned for a

temporary 12-month period to assess whether there is any disturbance to adjoining residents. A condition is also recommended for a Service Delivery Management Plan to be submitted to manage delivery operations. It should be noted that traffic generation has been considered in the highways section of this report.

There is the potential for plant machinery to cause noise and disturbance to nearby neighbouring residential amenities which have also been addressed in the Noise Impact Assessment Ref: 7806/FD/JA/BL (dated 5 June 2020). The applicants have proposed constructing a 2m close boarded fence around external plant, which is considered acceptable in terms of minimising the impact of noise on neighbouring properties. This fence should have a minimum mass of 10kg/m² to be effective and would be included as a condition to any forthcoming planning permission. No objection is, therefore, raised in this regard under Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 127f of the NPPF.

In terms of external lighting, these details would be required to be submitted and approved in writing by the Council prior to any installation of external lights to limit the impact of the lighting on the nearby residents in accordance with Policy BNE5 of the Local Plan.

Additionally, the proposal is supported by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) Report No Gil/CEMP/01 (dated 9 April 2020), which is considered acceptable in terms of minimising the impact of the construction period on the amenities of residents with regard to BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 127f of the NPPF. Any forthcoming planning permission would therefore include a condition that the construction works shall be carried out at all times in accordance with the CEMP.

Highways

Site Access

Policy T1 of the Local Plan states that proposals should not significantly add to the risk of road traffic accidents; and Policy T2 of the Local plan states that proposals which involve intensification in use of an existing access will only be permitted where it would not be detrimental to the safety of vehicle occupants, cyclists and pedestrians or can be improved to a standard acceptable to the Council as Highway Authority. Paragraph 108 of the NPPF states that applications for development should provide safe and suitable access to the site for all users.

The application proposes one point of vehicular access which would make use of the existing access onto Medway Road that currently serves The Walnut Tree Club. It is proposed that the existing access would be adjusted to meet current highways standards and a swept path analysis has been completed to demonstrate that, after the adjustments to the access, a delivery vehicle can safely enter and exit the site in a forward gear as illustrated on drawing number SCP/18539/002 Rev C within the Transport Assessment Doc Ref: CG/18539/TA01B (dated June 2020). This access

would also serve as a pedestrian access and the submitted plan (drawing number AD 110_REV G) shows a pedestrian crossing at the entrance to the Walnut Tree Club with a footpath along the western boundary and a second pedestrian crossing from this footpath to the entrance of the retail unit to provide safe pedestrian routes onto and around the proposed development. Additionally, the proposal would re-instate a previously existing footpath along Medway Road that is currently overgrown, along with a pedestrian crossing on Medway Road from the student accommodation to the reinstated footpath. (This would be secured by an agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act). It is considered that these arrangements would provide a safe pedestrian access to the site along with an improvement to the existing vehicle access to the site to a standard which would be acceptable to the Council and in accordance with Policy T2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 109 of the NPPF.

Traffic generation and impact

Policy T1 of the Local Plan states that proposals will be permitted where the highway network has adequate capacity to cater for the traffic which would be generated by the development and Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan states that development should protect those amenities enjoyed by nearby properties with regard to traffic generation. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be unacceptable impact on highways safety.

The proposed scheme could potentially generate approx. 168 vehicle trips per peak hour during the PM peak on a weekday and approx. 229 trips per peak hour during the PM peak during the weekend peak as outlined in the submitted Transport Assessment Doc Ref: CG/18539/TA01B (dated June 2020). It is considered that some of these trips associated with the proposal would be diverted from existing retail provision within the local vicinity (primarily ASDA) or would be likely passing by from other trips such as work commutes and school runs and would therefore not represent an increase of traffic in the town centre road network. The Transport Assessment goes on to predict that 50% of the additional traffic would be linked/pass by trips to the store therefore the actual additional vehicle trips generated during the weekday peak could be estimated at approx. 84 and 114 at the weekend. Although the exact figure of diverted trade may vary slightly from these figures, because this traffic is already on the network, whether the final destination is LIDL or ASDA, it is not considered to detrimentally impact highway traffic generation

The applicants have undertaken capacity assessments at the site access and at the B2004 Medway Road/Wharf Road signal controlled junction, which is discussed in the Transport Assessment Ref. CG/18539/TA01A. The junction modelling demonstrates that the access would not create any significant delays or result in an impact that would be deemed severe. With regard to Medway Road/ Wharf Road junction, the assessment demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity with a maximum degree of saturation at 67.9%.

In considering the previous application (MC/19/1875) highways concerns were raised by Members relating to this proposed being the only Lidl in Medway, therefore cars would be travelling from all over Medway, in addition to this the store would be adjacent to a complex road junction and queues will worsen when the store opens, increase in existing excessive speeds on B2004; lastly the loss of on-street parking in Medway

Road could lead to hazardous on-street parking on narrow neighbouring roads. A Transport Assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates that on the extreme assumption that 70% of Lidl's agreed trip generation (170 two-way) in the PM peak hour will be new to the network and that over 80% of that traffic will be drawn from Pier Road, traffic flows will only increase by 2.2% across the whole intersection, significantly less than 10% (the typical day-to-day fluctuation in traffic flow). On the two A289 approach arms, the impact is less than 1.5%. With regard to concerns of excessive speeds, a speed survey confirmed that the 85%ile speed was 24mph. Visibility out of the site access towards Medway Road is in excess of 2.4m by 43m which is the standard required for a 30mph road. There is no evidence of excessive speed on the approach to the access and therefore no risk to highway safety as a result of the proposals. A drawing has been submitted showing the swept path of an HGV turning right out of the site and lining up at the stop line clear of eastbound traffic. The space between the site access and the stop line is sufficient for 4 cars to queue. Regarding the loss of parking, it has been confirmed that this area of parking is not essential to the network and that such vehicles can easily be accommodated in Rosebery Road.

It is therefore considered that the highway network has adequate capacity to cater for the traffic which would be generated by the proposal and would not create any significant delays or result in an impact that would be deemed severe. Therefore, no concerns would be raised with regard to Policy BNE2 and T1 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 109 of the NPPF.

Parking

Policy T13 of the Local Plan states that proposal will be expected to make vehicle parking provisions in accordance with the Council's adopted standard and Paragraph 106 of the NPPF states that maximum parking standards for non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification.

The site is proposed to have 96 spaces to serve the development which is slightly more than the number of spaces outlined in Medway's Parking Standards, however no objections would be raised in this regard. Of the proposed spaces, 6 disabled parking spaces are provided, 8 parent and child spaces are provided; and 4 spaces are provided with an electric charging station as set out on drawing number AD 110_REV G received 18 June 2020. 4 spaces with a 2 electric vehicle charging points are considered appropriate at this stage, however it is recommended that this situation be reviewed after 3 years to assess whether the demand for electric vehicle charging points has increased. This can be addressed by an appropriately worded condition, in any forthcoming planning permission.

The applicant has provided a parking accumulation to demonstrate that the parking is sufficient to meet the average demand. A total of 10 cycle parking spaces are proposed, which accords with the Council's Parking Standards. A condition would be included on any planning permission to provide these spaces prior to the occupation of the unit in the interest of highways safety in accordance with Policies T1 and T13 of the Local Plan.

Accessibility by Sustainable Modes of Transport

Policy T14 of the Local Plan states that Travel Plans will be required for developments which require a transport assessment and Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that development proposals should identify and pursue opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

The area around the development site encourages walking and cycling, with the pedestrian and cycling provision. The proposal also includes further improvements (drawing number SCP/18539/003 Rev A received 28 July 2020) within the local vicinity which are:

- Reinstatement of the existing overgrown footway at the north side of Medway Road all the way up to the west side of the bridge.
- Extension of double-yellow line parking restrictions on the south side of Medway Road to facilitate safer vehicle and pedestrian movements, and;
- Introduction of a new pedestrian refuge with dropped kerbs and tactile paving approximately 30m east of the site access including a refuge island and tactile pavement at both sides of the road.

The improvements outlined above would be secured by a condition requiring an agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act. They would be required to be implemented prior to the retail unit coming into use in the interest of highways and pedestrian safety and in accordance with Policies T1 and T3 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 102 and 109 of the NPPF.

There is a number of existing bus services that are within the local vicinity of the site providing services to lower Gillingham, Walderslade, Chatham and Hempstead. The nearest railway station is at Gillingham, which is within a 15-minute walk from the proposed site. The station is served by frequent trains to Rainham to the east and Chatham and Rochester to the west. The proposed development is well located such that for certain journeys undertaken by customers and staff could be undertaken by walking, cycling, bus or train thereby providing a viable alternative to the use of the private car. The submitted Travel Plan Ref: JRB/18539/TP01C (dated June 2020) received 18 June 2020 sets out proposed sustainable travel measures to promote walking, cycling, car sharing and public transport use to its customers and staff members, which would be conditioned in any forthcoming planning permission.

It is considered that the proposal is acceptable with regard to highways safety, capacity and sustainability, in accordance with Policies BNE2, T1, T2, T3, T13 and T14 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 102, 106, 108, 109 of the NPPF.

Contamination

A Phase 1 Desk Study and Phase 2 Ground Investigation report have been submitted with the application. The reports are in line with current guidance and the findings that potential contaminants did not exceed the assessment criteria for the proposed end use are accepted. However, as made ground is present on the site from previous use and demolition, a watching brief condition is recommended to address any unexpected contamination. Subject to this condition, no objection is raised under Policy BNE23 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 178 of the NPPF.

Air Quality

Paragraph 181 of the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan. Policy BNE24 of the Local Plan outlines when an application requires an assessment of the likely impact of emissions and goes on to outline that development will not be permitted when it is considered that unacceptable effects will be imposed on the health, amenity or natural environment of the surrounding area, taking into account the cumulative effects of other proposed or existing sources of air pollution in the vicinity.

The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment Ref: AQ_assessment/2019/Lidl_MedwayRd (dated 4 June 2020). It is considered that the air quality impacts have been appropriately assessed and that the impacts of the proposed development should be insignificant, particularly in the context of nearby sensitive receptors (including within The Pier Road AQMA).

The provision of EV charging points would be conditioned to be phased, with 2 EV charging points to serve four vehicles and the infrastructure in place to increase this number at a later date. The submission of a parking management plan and the increase the number of charging points to 10 after 3 years will be conditioned.

Lastly, the air quality damage costs calculated in the Quality Assessment Ref: AQ_assessment/2019/Lidl_MedwayRd (dated 4 June 2020) must be used as the basis for drawing up an air quality mitigation scheme that offsets the additional emissions generated by development related road transport emissions. This mitigation scheme must be drawn up in accordance with the Medway Air Quality Planning Guidance, which would be conditioned in any forthcoming planning.

Subject to the above conditions relating to EV vehicle charging points, parking management plan and air quality emissions mitigation statement, the proposal is in accordance with Policy BNE24 of the Local Plan and paragraph 181 of the NPPF.

Flood Risk and Surface Water

Policy CF13 of the Local Plan outlines development will not be permitted within a tidal flood area in particular circumstances. Specifically, Policy CF13 of the Local Plan states:

Development will not be permitted within a tidal flood risk area if:

- (i) it harms the integrity of the flood defences; or
- (ii) it fails to provide for a means of escape for people in the event of a flood; or
- (iii) it introduces residential living and sleeping accommodation below the estimated flood level; or
- (iv) it introduces mobile homes or caravans; or
- (v) it introduces new holiday accommodation between October and May.

Paragraphs 158 and 163 of the NPPF are also relevant.

The lead LLFA has commented as follows in terms of flood risk (the relevant section of the response is set out in full as flood risk has proved a contentious issue in light of the current litigation referenced above):

The site is situated predominantly in Flood Zone 1 in accordance with the most up to date Environment Agency mapping. Flood Zones relate to the risk of tidal and fluvial flooding; Flood Zone 1 represents very low risk where the risk of flooding in any one year less than 1%. There is a small area along the northern boundary, which is at low risk, where the risk of flooding in any one year is between 0.1% and 1%.

EA mapping also indicates that the site is at high risk of surface water flooding with estimated depths under a high-risk scenario of less than <300mm, and some localised areas of 300-900mm depths under a medium risk scenario. The low-risk scenario indicates greater depths, but there is more uncertainty associated with the low order event, and therefore the medium risk event should be appraised for design purposes. There are known surface water flooding issues adjacent to the site along Pier Road, but this does not impact the site itself which is situated at a higher level.

As the site and proposed development are outside of the high-risk tidal flood zone, no further consideration is required in that respect. A Sequential Test is not currently applicable under the current NPPF.

Although not currently relevant, it is noted that the applicant presents a site-specific Sequential Test at Appendix L in accordance with para 33 of NPPG, in absence of the Local Authority having a flood risk Sequential Test as part of its Local Plan.

The exercise culminated in 13 sites. Of those 13 sites, 3 sites (site A Machine Shop 08 on Dock Head Road, site B former Gas Holder site on Pier Road and site C Gads Hill Industrial Estate, Owens Way), and were discarded due to higher risks of flooding

and considered 'sequentially inferior' to the application site in flood risk terms. The LLFA agrees with this assessment.

It should be noted as set out above that the High Court has considered that the view set out above by the LLFA that the sequential test does not apply where there is a risk of surface water flooding is arguably wrong, and that the Council should have considered in line with the sequential approach whether there were reasonably available sites for this development at less risk of all forms of flooding including surface water flooding. Therefore, the Council (as set out in more detail below) has approached this application on the basis that the sequential test does apply. The Council has however taken into account the rest of the comments of the LLFA in respect of the assessment of flood risk, both of this site and others considered by the applicant when applying the sequential approach referred to in the NPPF.

Although the LLFA has been consulted on this proposal, it should be noted that in accordance with guidance there is no requirement to consult the Environment Agency in relation to this proposal, as this is not an area of critical drainage problems.

The Sequential Test

The NPPF states at paragraph 158 that:

"The aim of the sequential test is to steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. The strategic flood risk assessment will provide the basis for applying this test. The sequential approach should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding"

The NPPG at paragraph 033 (Reference ID: 7-033-20140306) refers to the sequential test. It states that (own emphasis) *"any development proposal should take into account the likelihood of flooding from other sources, as well as from rivers and the sea. The sequential approach to locating development in areas at lower flood risk should be applied to all sources of flooding, including development in an area which has critical drainage problems, as notified to the local planning authority by the Environment Agency, and where the proposed location of the development would increase flood risk elsewhere."*

The High Court has granted an objector permission to bring judicial review against the previous grant of permission for this scheme on the basis, in summary, that the Council misinterpreted the NPPF and the NPPG in that the sequential test and approach as referred to are synonymous, and that the sequential approach meant that the Council should have considered whether there were other reasonably available sites in areas at lower risk of surface water flooding than this particular development. The Council's position in that litigation is that the sequential approach can be satisfied so long as the risk of surface water flooding within the site has been satisfactorily addressed. However, without prejudice to that position, this report has nonetheless proceeded to analyse the proposed development out of caution on the assumption that the Claimant in those proceedings is correct and that therefore the sequential

test/approach as referenced in the NPPF and the NPPG means that a local planning authority must consider whether or not there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding including surface water flooding.

The Applicant has submitted a report to support the application of that alternative approach described above (i.e a sequential test involving consideration of other reasonably available sites at lower risk of any form of flooding including surface water flooding) within the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (FRA) (dated April 2021) under appendix L.

The NPPG on flood risk at paragraph 033 (Reference ID: 7-033-20140306) also states that *“For individual planning applications where there has been no sequential testing of the allocations in the development plan, or where the use of the site being proposed is not in accordance with the development plan, the area to apply the Sequential Test across will be defined by local circumstances relating to the catchment area for the type of development proposed.”*. In this case there has been no such sequential testing, so this particular aspect of the guidance applies here when considering the area of search.

The FRA has identified a catchment area that the proposed store is intended to serve in undertaking a search for alternative sites. This catchment has been defined by the applicants as both a desk-top exercise and an on the ground survey of the catchment area which is considered representative for a LAD store of circa 1,068sq m net sales having regard to: i) the fact that such stores serve a neighbourhood shopping function with a tight catchment that usually does not extend beyond 5 minutes drivetime; and ii) the proposed store at Medway Road is intended to serve the Gillingham North area.

It is considered that this identification of the search area by the Applicant is reasonable.

Within the identified catchment area, the sequential search initially identified 28 separate sites. However, 15 sites were assessed and discounted at an early stage as not being reasonably available or unsuitable to accommodate the proposed store (on the basis that they were too small to accommodate the proposed store and/or they are still in active use with no indication of being marketed for disposal):

- The Range, Dock Outlet Centre, Dock Head Road.
- Pier 5 The Quays, Dock Head Road.
- Ship & Trades Public House and adjoining Co-op store, Maritime Way.
- Quayside House (offices), Maritime Way.
- OSB House (offices), Maritime Way.
- Former Colonial House site, Quayside, Wheelwrights Way.
- Land at Chatham Waters, Southside Road/Gillingham Gate Road/East End Road.
- Mast & Rigging Public House, Gillingham Gate Road.
- Asda, Pier Approach Road.
- Premier Inn, Pier Road.
- Unite Students (student accommodation), Pier Road/Pegasus Way.

- Trust Ford Car Dealership, Pier Road.
- Gillingham Marina Chandlery, Pier Road.
- The Strand Leisure Centre/Lido, Strand Approach Road.
- Shell PFS, Dock Road.

There have been no comments or objections received through the formal consultation process criticising the approach taken by the applicant in its latest FRA when assessing these sites.

Officers have reviewed those sites in detail and consider that the approach taken by the applicant in relation to the discounting of these 15 sites was, for the most part, appropriate and in accordance with the pragmatic approach endorsed in Paragraph 033 (Reference ID: 7-033-20140306) of the NPPG, which states that:

“When applying the Sequential Test, a pragmatic approach on the availability of alternatives should be taken.”

However, it should be noted that in respect of the Gillingham Marina Chandlery, it does appear from officer’s review of those sites that this site is in fact available and may well be suitable for the development proposed here. However, it is in Flood Zone 3 and so is not sequentially preferable to the application site.

The 13 remaining potential sites were initially identified as part of an initial sift, of which 3 (Machine Shop 08 on Dock Head Road, the Gads Hill Industrial Estate on Owens Way and the former Gas Holder site on Pier Road) were discounted as being at a higher risk of flooding than the application site at Medway Road as they are located in Flood Zone 2 and 3.

The LLFA as set out above agrees with this particular assessment.

The FRA then examined the 10 remaining sites in more detail, in terms of their reasonable availability to accommodate the proposed discount food store. The Applicant considers that in accordance with the pragmatic approach set out in the NPPG at paragraph 033 (Reference ID: 7-033-20140306), reasonably available would mean that any site would need to be able to accommodate the store and car park; in a location that is viable in retail terms (which normally means having a main road frontage), with satisfactory access for customers and delivery vehicles and one which is acceptable in terms of development plan policy.

It is considered that this approach to assessing reasonable availability of other sites was reasonable and accords with the NPPG.

The FRA concluded that none of those sites initially identified were reasonably available to accommodate the proposed Lidl development. The Council agrees with that conclusion.

Conclusions on matters of the Sequential Test

The LLFA in summary agrees with the assessment under appendix L of the FRA (dated April 2021) with respect to the identification by the applicant of sites in a sequentially preferable location in terms of flood risk.

Officers have looked in detail at the analysis of the sites considered by the applicant that are in an area of lower flood risk (including surface water flood risk) and agree with the conclusions of the applicant's FRA that none of these are considered to be reasonably available or suitable for this type of development. It is noted that those sites have been discounted for reasons including that they are not Policy compliant with the Local Plan in terms of land allocation, they are too small to accommodate the proposal, they are currently in use with no indications of becoming available in the future.

Officers have reviewed the applicants' considerations of those sites, in particular having regard to the Medway Local Plan 2003 and Proposals Maps, and it is considered that the identified sites within the catchment area have been appropriately assessed and it is concluded that there is no alternative and available site within Gillingham North catchment that would be suitable for the development proposed.

Exception Test

The exception test is set out in paragraphs 159, 160 and 161 of the NPPF. The NPPF states at paragraph 159 that:

"If it is not possible for development to be located in zones with a lower risk of flooding (taking into account wider sustainable development objectives), the exception test may have to be applied. The need for the exception test will depend on the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed, in line with the Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification set out in national planning guidance."

The NPPG at para. 23 states that *"the exception test as set out at paragraph 160 of the NPPF is a method to demonstrate and help ensure that flood risk to people and property will be managed satisfactorily, while allowing necessary development to go ahead in situations where suitable sites at lower risk of flooding are not available."*

The NPPG at paragraph 35 addresses when the exception test should be applied to planning applications. It states as follows:

"See general guidance on the Exception Test. The Exception Test should only be applied as set out in Table 3 following application of the Sequential Test. An applicant will need to show that both elements of the Test, as set out in paragraph 159 of the Framework, can be satisfied." It also states that the exception test should only be applied as set out at Table 3 (at paragraph 2).

Table 3 in the NPPG sets out “flood risk vulnerability and flood zone compatibility” and indicates when development in those zones is appropriate or should not be permitted. It states that it does not reflect to avoid flood risk from sources other than rivers and the sea.

Page 8 of Appendix L of the applicants’ revised FRA sets out the applicant’s view of the need for the exception test and concludes that that an exception test is not required in this instance. This is because Table 3 in the NPPG indicates that for sites in Flood Zone 1, but which are less vulnerable, an exception test is not required, and that the assessment of the increased flood risk from other sources does not change the need for an exception test”

The LPA agrees with this assessment.

The NPPG does not specify that an exception test is required on the basis of high risk of surface water flooding within Flood Zone 1.

Furthermore, according to the flood risk vulnerability classification in the NPPG this proposal as a building to be used as a shop is classified as “less vulnerable”.

It should also be noted that even if the application site were in Flood Zones 2 or 3a then an exception test would still not be required due to the flood risk vulnerability classification of the proposal being “less vulnerable”. On this basis, there is nothing in guidance that suggests that a less vulnerable site Flood Zone 1, albeit one at high risk of surface water flooding, should be subject to the exception test.

Site specific flood risk assessment

Paragraph 163 of the NPPF states:

“When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

- a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location.*
- b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient.*
- c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.*
- d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.”*

The applicant has a submitted site-specific Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (SCP, Ref: CW/190320/FRA/RevD, dated April 2021), as required in accordance with paragraph 163 of the NPPF. This had regard to the Council’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2006, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Addendum 2011 and draft Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2020).

The proposals and that assessment have been reviewed by officers in the context of paragraph 163 of the NPPF and the submitted Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy taking into account what the LLFA has stated in its consultation response.

The LLFA has concluded that the proposed development satisfies each element of paragraph 163. The LLFA concludes that it has been demonstrated that the identified risks can be suitably mitigated and that the site will be designed to be safe.

Taking account of the LLFA comments, the Council considers that subject to conditions in respect of surface water drainage, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy CF13 of the Local Plan and paragraph 163 of the NPPF.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The application is not located within a core retail area, nor within any other area allocated for retail use. The Sequential Test included within the Planning and Retail Statement has been considered having regard to the provisions of (i) – (iii) of Policy R13 of the Local Plan, and Paragraphs 80 and 86 of the NPPF as well as the QC advice submitted by the applicant in support of the application.

It is considered that the identified sites within the retail areas of Gillingham and Chatham have been appropriately assessed and it is concluded that there is no suitable site within core retail areas of Gillingham or Chatham that would be suitable for the development proposed.

With regard to the provisions of Policy R13 (iv) – (vii) of the Local Plan, although it is concluded there is no requirement to submit a retail impact assessment, the Council have given the impact on existing due consideration and conclude that given the size and type of the proposal, it would not undermine vitality and viability of existing centres, Local Centres, Villages or Neighbourhood Centres; additionally, the location enables access by a range of transport, including public transport; and some trips would be likely passing by from other trips.

In considering the sequential assessment and the impact to town centre vitality and viability, the proposal is in accordance with the criteria of Policy R13 of the Local Plan as well as paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF.

Careful consideration has been given to the design and appearance of the proposed development and changes have been secured, and the scheme is considered acceptable. Furthermore, detailed assessment of flood risk and drainage as well as the impact on amenity, highways, contamination and air quality and the proposal is considered to comply with Policies BNE1, BNE2, BNE23, BNE24, T1, T2, T4, T13, T14 and CF13 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 102, 106, 108, 109, 124, 127, 158,

163, 178 and 181 of the NPPF. The application is, therefore recommended for approval.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred for Committee determination due to the previous applications being considered by Planning Committee.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>