

13 The Hive, Northfleet

Planning Statement

AN/37178

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application, submitted on behalf of Kent County Council ('the Applicant' or 'KCC') to Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) for the:

"Proposed change of use of the former Breakfast and Tuition Club (use class F1) to an Adult Education Service (use class F1)."

- 1.1.2 This statement provides an overview of the site, the proposed development and the relevant planning history; and a review of all applicable development plan policies as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant guidance.

1.2 APPLICANT

- 1.2.1 Kent County Council are committed to providing Adult Education Services across Kent. KCC propose to create more classroom space at The Hive Shopping Centre in Northfleet expanding their Adult Education Service (CLS).
- 1.2.2 Community Learning and Skills (CLS) is part of Kent County Council (KCC). The Applicant's purpose is to provide and secure learning opportunities for Kent's residents which engages and builds confidence, preparing them for further learning and employment. The service aims to improve essential skills in areas such as English, ESOL, maths, digital skills; equip parents/carers to support children's learning; and improve health and wellbeing to develop strong, integrated communities.
- 1.2.3 CLS engage with local communities throughout Kent to provide educational services which match the needs of local communities based on levels of prosperity, employment and priorities. CLS aims to ensure that their services provide learning appropriate to the needs of individuals and families at various stages in their lives.

1.3 APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

- 1.3.1 This statement summarises and appraises the proposed development in the context of the relevant planning policy requirements. It should be read together with the following form and plans:

REFERENCE	DOCUMENTS/DRAWINGS	AUTHOR
	Application Form	

DHA/37323/01	Site Location Plan	DHA UD
DHA/37273/02	Existing/Proposed Site Layout Plan	DHA UD
DHA/37273/03	Existing Floor Plan	DHA UD
DHA/37273/04	Proposed Floor Plan	DHA UD

TABLE O-1: SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

2 APPLICATION SITE

2.1 THE SITE

- 2.1.1 The site comprises the former Breakfast and Tuition Club, which is located within The Hive Shopping Centre, amongst other businesses and services.



FIGURE 2-1: SITE LOCATION PLAN (RED LINE INDICATIVE)

- 2.1.2 The site and the wider shopping centre sits in a predominantly residential area in the town of Northfleet. To the east and north of the site, lies a Bellway development comprising of apartments. Immediately west of the site lies rows of flats and south of the site lies the High Street and more residential dwellings.
- 2.1.3 The site lies within a Local Centre and sits east of the Swanscombe Peninsula SSSI. There are no other environmental or historic designations on site and the aforementioned designations will not impact this change of use application.
- 2.1.4 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and therefore is not subject to sea or river flooding.

2.2 PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.2.1 Gravesham Borough Council's online planning register records the following planning history for the site:

APPLICATION REF	DESCRIPTION	DECISION	DATE
20190600	Change of use from (B1) office to (D1) breakfast and tuition club.	Approved	16 Jan 2020
20110607	Installation of roller shutter blind.	Approved	06 Sep 2011
20020118	Change of use of premises from retail to offices.	Approved	17 Apr 2002

TABLE 2-1: PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.2.2 A review of the site confirms that the current use of the building falls within Use Class F1, which is the same as the proposed use, however, the original planning permission for the use of the building was as a "breakfast and tuition club". It was approved in 2019 under planning permission 20190600 and contains a condition which restricts the building to this specific use only. Condition 3 states:

"The breakfast and tuition club hereby permitted shall be used as such (within the meaning of Class D1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or any provision equivalent to that class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that order) and the premises shall not be used for any other purpose. Any storage uses undertaken at the premises shall be ancillary to the main D1 use only."

- 2.2.3 Given the above, it is considered that a planning application is required to change the use to an Adult Education Service.

3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 OVERVIEW

3.1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the following:

"Proposed change of use of the former Breakfast and Tuition Club (use class F1) to an Adult Education Service (use class F1)."



PHOTO ABOVE: FRONT ELEVATION ('SHOP FRONT') AS EXISTING

3.2 USE

- 3.2.1 The proposed change of use is from a former Breakfast and Tuition Club to an Adult Education Service. Both uses are under F1 Use Class. As stated previously, moving between different uses within the same class does not require planning permission unless there are specific restrictions in place. In this case, there is a restriction in condition 3 of planning permission 20190600.
- 3.2.2 The applicant proposes to create classroom space serving CLS. Expanding on their current services, the classroom will serve as a space for Adults in North Kent to

learn and expand their learning in a variety of ways, from English classes to equipping parents and carers to support children's learning.

- 3.2.3 The proposed teaching facility will operate core hours from 8:30- 4:30, with the potential of additional evening classes. This will help accommodate students with different schedules and needs.
- 3.2.4 The property will accommodate a single classroom, which will require one teacher and one teaching assistant. Occasionally, a non-teaching officer may be present. Therefore, the maximum number of staff on site at any one time will generally be two or three.
- 3.2.5 The property benefits from amenities, including two toilets, a staff room/kitchenette. These amenities will remain ancillary to the new development to service the teachers and students. The proposed property also includes a spacious area previously occupied by a shop and more recently a breakfast and tuition club. This will now be used as a classroom space to service students for learning.
- 3.2.6 The below figures show the existing floor plans and the proposed floor plans:

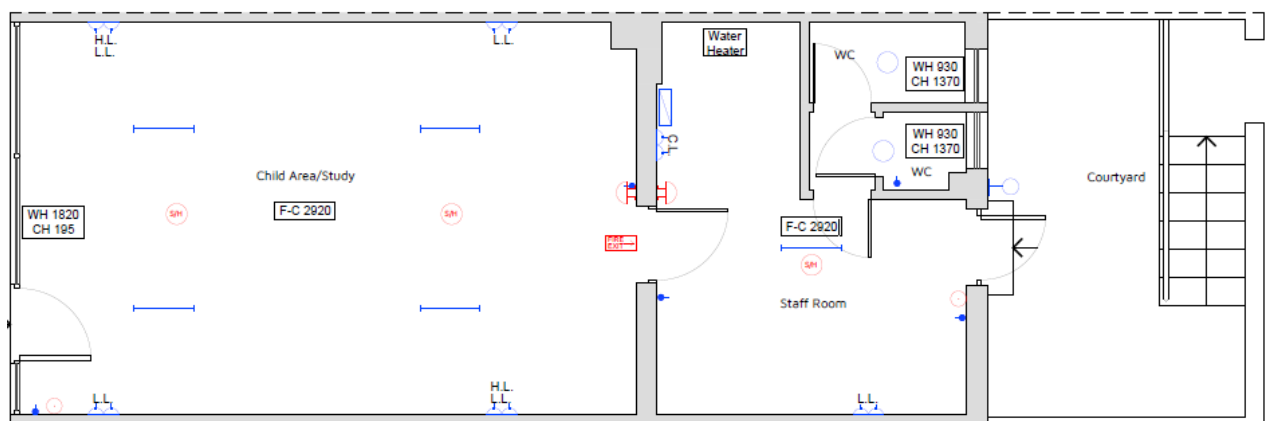


FIGURE 3-1: EXISTING FLOOR PLAN

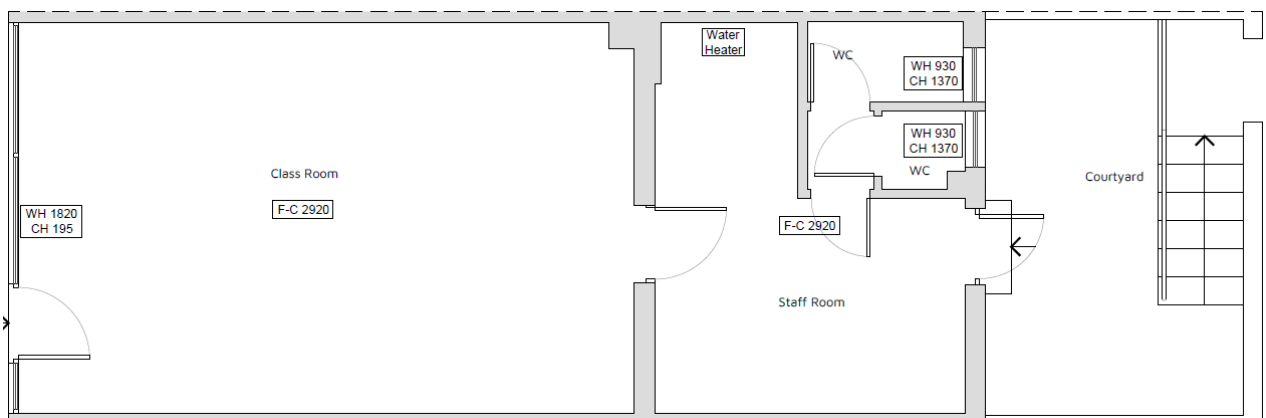


FIGURE 3-2: PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN

3.3 DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

- 3.3.1 The proposed change of use will not involve any external alterations to the property, besides from the sign on the shop frontage. This is covered by deemed consent under class 5 (advertisements on business premises) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007.
- 3.3.2 Besides new signage, the building's appearance will remain unchanged from its existing form and design.

3.4 ACCESS AND PARKING

- 3.4.1 The site is accessed through an outdoor precinct within The Hive Shopping Centre. This is to remain pedestrianised and there will be no material changes accessing the site. Students will enter through the 'front' of the site or the western entrance, as shown above. Staff will have the opportunity to enter through the courtyard area, into the staff room
- 3.4.2 The site is located in a highly accessible location as it sits within the local centre of Northfleet. It benefits from having good travel options such as the 480-bus service, which travels to Gravesend and Dartford, accessed via a stop less than 100 metres from the proposed development. Additionally, Northfleet train station offers services to surrounding areas in Kent including Gravesend and Medway and also provides services to London. The station lies 300 metres south west of the site and is easily accessible via a short walk.
- 3.4.3 If parking is required, there is available on-street parking within walking distance of the site. However, the applicant expects most students and teachers will travel to site via accessible modes of transportation and is aiming to attract students from the immediate local area.

4 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.1.2 For the purpose of this planning application the relevant development plan documents comprise of the:
- Gravesham Borough Council Local First Review (1994) – saved Policies
 - Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)
- 4.1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) is also considered as part of this proposal, being relevant material considerations.

4.2 GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL FIRST REVIEW (1994)

- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

4.3 GRAVESHAM LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS03 – Northfleet Embankment and Swanscombe Peninsula East Opportunity Area
- CS07 – Economy, Employment and Skills
- CS08 – Retail, Leisure and Hierarchy of Centres
- CS10 – Physical and Social Infrastructure
- CS11 – Transport
- CS08 – Retail, Leisure and Hierarchy of Centres
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

4.4 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The latest version was recently updated on the 12th of December 2024.

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 4.4.2 Paragraph 8 states that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These objectives are economic, social and environmental.

Decision-Making

- 4.4.3 Paragraph 39 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

- 4.4.4 Paragraph 100 states local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education.
- 4.4.5 Paragraph 101 states that to ensure faster delivery of other public service infrastructure such as adult education facilities, local planning authorities should also work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 4.4.6 Paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Making Effective Use of Land

- 4.4.7 Paragraph 124 states that strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

5 PLANNING APPRAISAL

5.1 OVERVIEW

- 5.1.1 The principle of this development is to address the need for Adult Education within Kent, while ensuring that the proposed change of use does not affect the character of the Shopping Centre and Neighbourhood.
- 5.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.3 In determining whether the proposal accords with the development plan, the following issues are considered:
- Principle of the proposed development
 - Need for Adult Education within Kent
 - Conditions preventing Permitted Development
 - Other Matters
 - Access and Highways
 - Residential Amenity and Noise
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

5.2 PRINCIPLE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Need for Adult Education within Kent

- 5.2.1 Adult Education provision across Kent has undergone a review, shifting the focus to the most disadvantaged, unskilled and low skilled people across the county. This includes providing the first steps towards employment via delivery of essential skills such as English, Maths and digital and employability skills. In Gravesend, Community Learning and Skills has left the large site at the Victoria Centre and has relocated some provision to New Beginnings based in the Parrock Farm area.
- 5.2.2 Research and data analysis from previous years has shown that there is long term, high need and demand for essential and employability skills in the Northfleet area. Community Learning and Skills are therefore seeking to locate within the Northfleet area to bring provision closer to the point of need.

- 5.2.3 Policy CS07 confirms that the Council will work with its regeneration partners to enhance opportunities for all local people to access the greater range of higher skilled jobs and that support will be given to upgrading educational and training facilities.
- 5.2.4 The above policy supports the need for upgrading educational and training facilities. The proposed development seeks to not only upgrade an existing facility, but to provide a new facility, specifically for upskilling adults to improve employability. The proposed development directly aligns with Policy CS07.
- 5.2.5 Policy CS08 states that the Council will seek to safeguard the retail character and function of existing and new centres by resisting development that would adversely affect their vitality and viability and protect lone village shops; and encourage the provision of a mix of units including opportunities for small shops and independent traders in all centres.
- 5.2.6 The above policy states that it will seek to safeguard retail character and function of existing centres. The current use is F1 and therefore no material change of use is taking place in The Hive Shopping Centre. The introduction of this Adult Education Centre will prevent the loss of a shop front, whilst creating a productive space for the local community. There is no loss of retail within the shopping centre, as it was used as a breakfast and tuition club, a very similar use to this provision. The proposed use will also continue to sustain on-site employment.
- 5.2.7 Additionally, KCC are leasing this unit with the intention of providing long lasting impact on Northfleet and the wider borough. With this in mind, funding is at the forefront of their goal. This space is not intended as a 'meanwhile use' and aims to remain in the shopping centre for the long-term.
- 5.2.8 With the above in mind, it is prudent that available units are provided for positive and productive uses that serve the community. This proposed development is both supported by national and local policy, especially policy CS07 and CS08 from the Core Strategy. Therefore, the proposed development is acceptable in principle and should be assessed against the following sections.

Conditions preventing Permitted Development

- 5.2.9 The proposed development is a proactive and positive development, purposed to serve a community in need of upskilling. The previous planning permission prevented a change of use through permitted development within the same use class by virtue of Condition 3, notwithstanding Section 55(2)(f) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 5.2.10 This application is therefore submitted to secure the necessary approvals, albeit it remains material to consider that the proposed use is of the same character and not materially different to the extant use. The proposed use will continue to directly meet a local educational need, in a form which is compatible with the site's

setting. As such, it will remain an appropriate use of the site in the same way that the previous use was found to be acceptable in planning terms.

- 5.2.11 The reason for the previous restrictive condition was *"in order that any other proposed use may be considered on its merits, in relation to the development plan (in particular Policies CS03, CS07, CS08, CS11 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014) and having its regard to employment provision, the local centre, residential amenity and highway safety"*. This application considers the proposed use against these identified policies and issues and finds the use to be acceptable.
- 5.2.12 It is clear that the previous condition was not therefore any kind of recognition that alternative F1 uses as a matter of principle would be unacceptable, but simply that they would need full assessment. This application satisfies this reason and finds the proposed use to meet the requirements of the identified development plan policies.

5.3 OTHER MATTERS

Access and Parking

- 5.3.1 KCC and CLS support the use of sustainable transport and therefore encourage students and teachers to walk, cycle or take public transport, where possible, which is supported by policy both locally and nationally. On-street parking is available but will not be advised. It is presumed that most students will be from the surrounding area and therefore can walk, cycle or take the bus as cited above.
- 5.3.2 The site is easily accessed with a clear path leading to the shopping centre, with ramp access available. The proposed use is also not materially different to the extant use. This complies with paragraph 116 of the NPPF and therefore we do not expect there to be any transport implications.

Residential Amenity and Noise

- 5.3.3 The proposed change of use will not result in any significant impact on residential amenity. The site's previous use as a tuition and breakfast club would have frequent visitors as part of its operations including staff, arrivals and deliveries. The use for an Adult Education Service is in the same use class use will likely produce similar levels of activity. The change of use will therefore likely provide enhancements to the amenity of its neighbours due to its shorter hours of operations.
- 5.3.4 Additionally, it is situated in an existing shopping centre where retailers are producing similar levels of noise.

- 5.3.5 Overall, it can be seen that the proposed development will not impact residential amenity and therefore is acceptable in planning terms.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 5.3.6 As per government guidance, this site benefits from the *de minimis* exemption, being the change of use of a building only, and therefore the applicant does not need to provide BNG for the proposed development.

6 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

6.1 OVERVIEW

- 6.1.1 Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications for planning permission are required to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the development plan in force unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.1.2 This statement has been prepared in support of a full application in relation to the change of use of the Breakfast and Tuition Club to an Adult Education Centre for CLS. This proposed development is supported by local and national planning policy as well as supplementary guidance, does not cause any severe or material highways impact, preserves residential amenity and will help create an important space for adult education for the local community and wider public. It will support employment and deliver tangible benefits to education and the community by securing improved, consolidated and more efficient and effective operations on a single site.
- 6.1.3 Overall, given the context of the site, the proposed development is deemed to be acceptable and in accordance with the relevant policies from the Development Plan and the other material considerations. It should thus benefit from the presumption in favour, representing sustainable development in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- 6.1.4 For the reasons given above, we respectfully request that the Council give this planning application favourable consideration and grant planning permission for the proposed change of use, subject to appropriate conditions.