

Application Number	18/01369/AS
Location	Old Corn Store and former Ashford Youth Theatre, Dover Place, Ashford, Kent TN23 1HU
Grid Reference	01207/42321
Parish Council	None
Ward	Victoria
Application Description	Refurbishment of the existing Corn Store and former Youth Theatre buildings to provide workspace, food, drink, and event space. Demolition of the existing Youth Theatre Store to provide an enlarged flexible outdoor event space
Applicant	Ashford Borough Council
Agent	Carl Turner
Site Area	0.16 hec

(a) 60/3R, 1S	(b) -	(c) CACF +, KCC H&T X, KCC Bio X, CTRL +, NR +, PS X, ES X, EP X, CS X, PO (D) X, KP X, SWS X
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Introduction

1. This application is reported to the Planning Committee because the Borough Council is both the owner of the site and the applicant.

Site and Surroundings

2. The site lies to the south of Dover Place and to the north of Station Approach and has a frontage onto both those roads. To the east lies the access road to International House (an 11 storey office building) plus associated landscaped areas and to the west lies a car lot.
3. To the south lies one of the Network Rail car parks serving the stations whilst to the north is the Dover Place car park owned and managed by this Council. The wider area contains a mixture of uses, with the land generally to the north being the commercial quarter within which the CQ38 office building has

recently been constructed. Further to the west is an old warehouse now Cameo Nightclub which is a Grade II Listed Building which has some visual synergy with the older buildings on the application site.

4. The site itself contains a mixture of historic and other buildings and is part of what has been termed “the Island Site”. It comprises of four distinct buildings and a central yard space. The historic Corn Mill building is part of the application site but there are no proposals within this application for that building. It forms an important edge to the open yard space. The site boundary in the west is defined by the Corn Store and Corn Store Hall, and the former Youth Theatre buildings consisting of a theatre (former industrial building) and associated store with perimeter fencing enclosing the yard along the north and south boundaries. The existing layout is as shown in Figure 1 below.

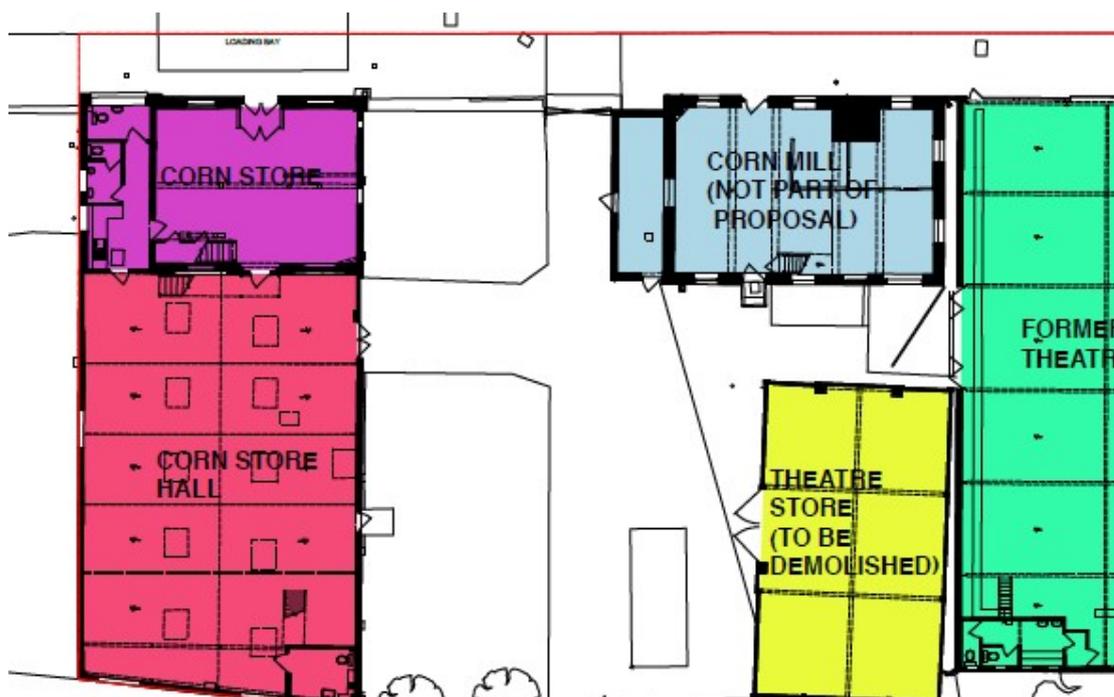


Figure 1: existing layout of site.



Photos 1&2: Old Corn Mill (with Youth Theatre beyond) and Old Corn Store



Existing yard



Former Youth Theatre approach from south east



Former Youth Theatre interior



Former Youth Theatre interior



Approach to site from north



Corn Store interior

5. Former Youth Theatre - Last occupied in 2016 the former Youth Theatre building is a portal frame shed with a combination of brick, glass and asbestos cement corrugated cladding. It is accessed from Dover Place through a large barn door and from the internal yard via a ramp, as the building sits lower on the site. The building has an area of approx. 337 sq m. Adjacent is the Theatre Store, a blockwork single storey shed which will be demolished as part of the proposals.
6. Corn Store - Fronting Dover Place is the three storey Corn Store building, a former furniture store and office. It is constructed of brick under a slated roof and has some elevational detailing of historic interest. The Corn Store has been subdivided into a series of office units with a reception and kitchen/WC area on ground floor. To the rear is a single storey warehouse, a later addition named the Corn Store Hall. The hall features an exposed truss roof structure and small timber mezzanine to the rear. Floor area is approx. 484 sqm.
7. A site plan showing the location of the site, the location of the adjoining Listed Building and the proximity of flood zones is in Appendix 1.

Proposal

8. Planning permission is sought for a change of use to allow a flexible mix of A3/A4, B1(a) and D2 uses to transform and revitalise the existing historic building (Corn Store) and the Theatre building, which have been disused since 2016, and to refurbish/re-clad as necessary plus re-use/re-configuration of the yard area as a mixed A3/A4/D2 area. The site would be divided into 4 zones notionally called The Platform (Corn Store and Hall), The Loggia (part of the yard), The Event Yard (ditto) and The Hothouse (Youth Theatre).
9. The Platform - The Platform will house start-up work space and a co-work incubator (B1(a)). Existing partitions will be stripped out in the three storey Corn Store building and a combination of new open plan desk space and small offices created, working with the existing location of structure and stairs. The strategy for this building is a very light touch refurbishment with minimal intervention to the existing fabric. The Corn Store can be accessed directly from the street (Dover Place), giving the co-work hub a dedicated front door. The approach to Corn Store Hall is also light touch. The primary change in this space is the insertion of an independent mezzanine structure which slots between the existing roof trusses and creates meeting spaces below. Existing plumbing and services will be reused where possible. Existing openings to the adjacent yard space are retained to provide separate access to the hall, allowing the Corn Store and Corn Store Hall to function independently if required.
10. The Loggia and Event Yard – this would become a new social and cultural meeting space for Ashford (A3/A4/D2). It will play host to an outdoor event space and includes a new loggia structure, inserted between the Corn Store and Corn Mill. The gable end of the loggia signals the entrance to Dover

Place Yard and the loggia forms an outdoor room with integrated lighting, creating a frame for awnings and installations that could be carried out in a number of formats dependent on the time of year and proposed function. A portal frame creates a grand entrance to the site and also acts as a series of outdoor rooms. The four equally sized outdoor rooms are loosely defined and flexible enough to act as an extension of the Platform and the Hothouse for particular events. This frame can be covered in places to create a sheltered tempered space for outdoor working, seating, craft markets etc. It also provides a useful structure to hang lighting, temporary installations, roof coverings and other elements from.

11. The Event Yard on the southern edge consists of tiered timber seating which frames a central event space with the tall Corn Mill building forming a backdrop. This can be used for events such as theatre, cinema and live sports screenings in the summer months or just somewhere to sit in the sun and have a beer. The amphitheatre structure links into the mezzanine level of the Hothouse, providing an alternative entrance and useful terrace. Films and art installations could be projected onto the Corn Mill building, utilising its elevation as an additional element of the amphitheatre structure.
12. The Hothouse - the approach to the Former Youth Theatre building reimagines it as a multi-functional space which is part greenhouse, part event space and part food/drink hall (A3/A4/D2). The external cladding would all be stripped, the structure painted a bright colour then re-clad the structure in a profiled polycarbonate sheeting. The building would become a big greenhouse that acts as a lantern at night. The introduction of large sliding openings on the facade gives views out and helps to cool the building down through cross ventilation in the summer months. The ground floor is divided into two zones. The main space is the double-height event area. The other half at ground floor is a food hall with six kiosks and a service zone containing WCs, plant, storage and circulation. Above this is a mezzanine bar which overlooks the indoor events area providing an upper level of seating. Large acoustic curtains can be used to line and subdivide the main space, transforming it for different events.
13. Colour and graphics will be added to the exterior of all buildings, through painted signage and painted elements of the building fabric. The detail of these will need to be agreed by condition. Lighting will also be important to draw in visitors after dusk again to be agreed. Colourful elements such as the painted steel loggia and graphic colours to the bleacher seating / fencing combined with brightly coloured freezer curtains, neon signs and painted text will animate the central yard.
14. The most distinctive external feature will be the polycarbonate cladding to the new Hothouse. The distinctive painted portal frame will be seen through the cladding, during the day an opaque / milky appearance, and at night transformed into a glowing light box; a beacon to draw in locals and visitors

alike. Window apertures will be cut into the polycarbonate to create direct visual connections with the interior events, and doors will remain open during hours of operation.

15. The access and management of the site is an important consideration given the uses proposed. The existing buildings all have independent access – both the Platform (previously the Corn Store) and the Hothouse (former youth theatre) have their own front door to the street. The proposals compliment and enhance the existing access arrangements – the two buildings can operate entirely separately or as one big site. The Yard can be closed down and the buildings open (for example, for a private party all but the Hothouse could be off limits, minimising security and management staff requirements) or the inverse, with the Yard hosting an outdoor event whilst both buildings are closed to visitors. Furthermore, the two halves of both the Platform and the Hothouse can be operated separately if desired, giving an additional level of flexibility for potential operators. The existing security fencing will be replaced by vertical timber screen on steel and timber structure to north and south boundaries.
16. Refuse and recycling will be stored off-street in a storage area below the proposed bleacher seating structure. No parking will be provided on the site but parking is available in a number of close by public car parks and disabled parking is available at Dover Place and International House. More detail of this is in the assessment section.
17. Overall the following floorspace would be provided plus the events area.

Use Class	Existing gross internal floorspace (square metres)	Gross internal floorspace to be lost by change of use or demolition (square metres)	Total gross new internal floorspace proposed (including changes of use) (square metres)	Net additional gross internal floorspace following development (square metres)
Sui Generis	484	484	0	-484
A3 - Restaurants and cafes	0	0	165	165
A4 - Drinking establishments	0	0	147	147
B1 (a) - Office (other than A2)	0	0	512	512
D2 - Assembly and leisure	457	287	170	-117
Total	941	771	994	223

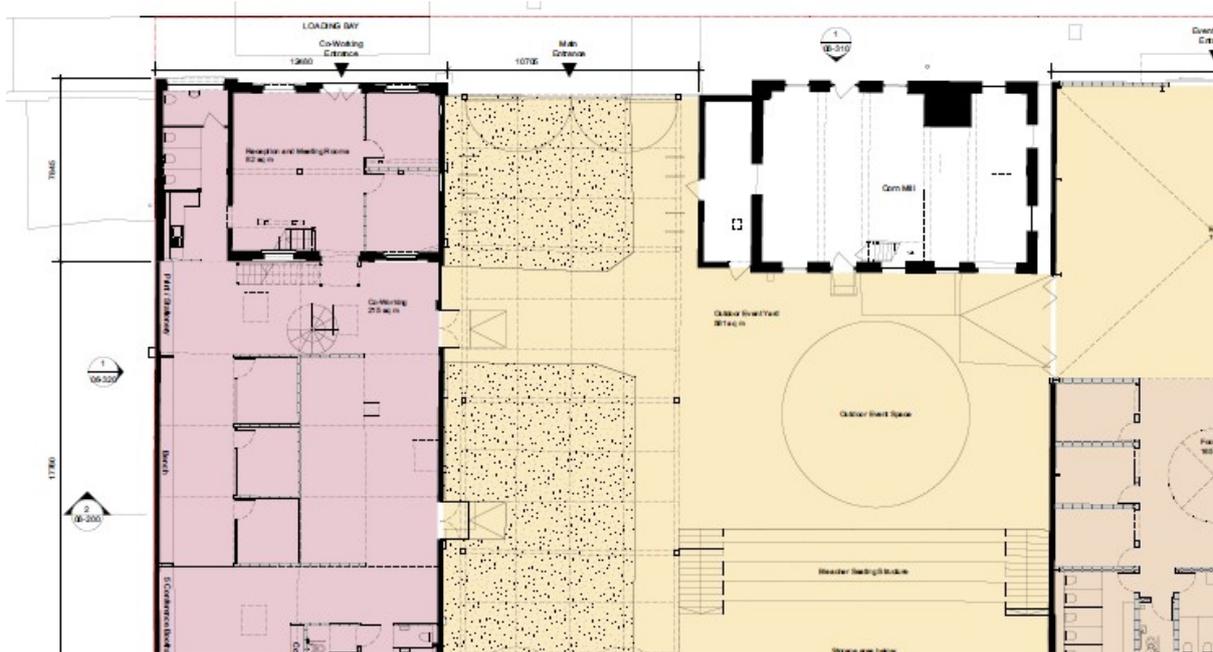


Figure 2: Proposed ground floor plan

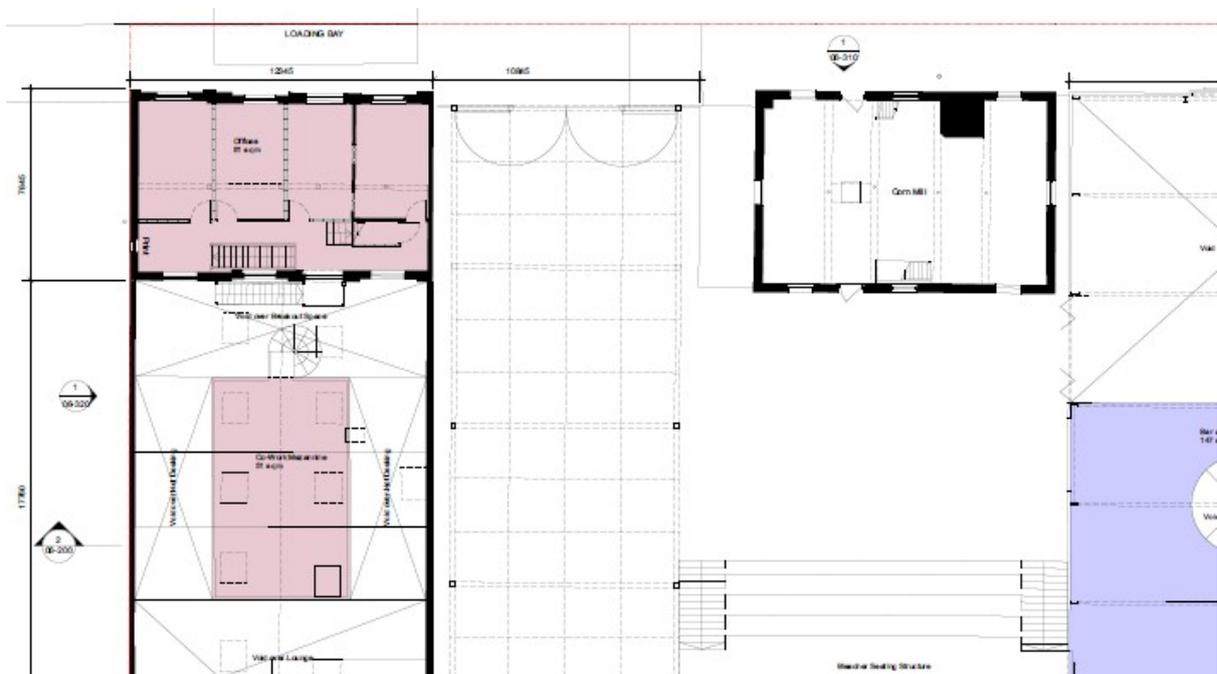


Figure 3: Proposed First Floor Plan (floor 3 of Old Corn Store has similar layout)



Figure 4: Conceptual elevations (actual elevations will be on display but are not reproduced here due to the level of detail)

18. The application is accompanied by a number of documents as follows:-
- Design and Access statement – this analyses the site and its context, provides a site history, contains a heritage statement, sets out the aims and objectives of the scheme and the design approach.
 - Transport Assessment plus addendum – this details the sites sustainable location and travel options, the need for car and cycle parking and sets out the justification for the latter being provided off site
 - Acoustic Report – this sets out that an environmental noise survey has been undertaken in order to establish the currently prevailing noise levels. An assessment has been carried out to determine the impact of potential music noise emissions from the proposed development. The assessment indicates that noise emissions from the proposed development will likely be inaudible at the nearest noise sensitive properties, but recommends that electronic limiters are used to control any Lmax events that may occur. Plant noise emission criteria have been recommended based on the results of the noise survey and with reference to the Local Authority’s requirements.
 - Ecological appraisal – concludes that faunal opportunities at the site are largely limited to common, urban species whilst there is also some low potential for bats to make use of the site. The proposals present the opportunity to secure a number of biodiversity benefits, including additional native tree planting and more diverse nesting habitats for birds.

- Land contamination assessment – this states that the geology underlying the Site comprises Wealden Clay and potentially Atherfield Clay bedrock. There is no record of any aquifers being present on site and it is not located within a groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ).
The Site is not in a Flood Risk Area. Approximately 75m east of the Site is the nearest water course; Great Stour river. Potential sources of contamination have been identified and assessed as moderate to low risk.

19. The reports can be viewed on-line and issues arising from them are covered in the assessment section.
20. The proposal is to manage the development in a unique way allowing flexible terms on which office and other commercial space can be hired to encourage use by growing enterprises of a unique nature that can contribute to the diversity of the offer in the town centre. Officers have visited Pop Brixton and Peckham Levels to see how similar “Meanwhile uses” sites are managed.

Planning History

The only planning application of relevance is:-

06/00232/AS - Change of use to furniture and baby equipment recycling service. Retraining and job experience for the long term unemployed. Client counselling and associate administration office for all activities. Permitted.

Consultations

A public consultation event was held at the Taproom, Ashford in July to present the project to the wider community and gather feedback. A website (www.coach-works.co.uk) has also been set up where visitors can contact the project team, make suggestions and register interest for the workspace and commercial units.

The proposal was advertised on site and in the press.

Ward Members: Cllr Dara Farrell and Cllr Charles Suddards are the Ward Members for this application. Neither of the Ward Members has formally commented on the application.

KCC Highways and Transportation: Do not wish to comment but have informally stated that there are no changes to parking and servicing associated with the proposals. Also Dover Place is a private road and there is a pay and display car park next to the site.

Parking services: The reasons for providing lower parking provision than would

normally be expected, given the level of parking elsewhere and the proximity of the rail and bus services, is understood, but there is reason for some parking, not least for staff and for disabled visitors. Disabled Parking is not present in the corner of the car park close to the proposed site - existing bays are located in the furthest section of the car park, closest to the amenities of the town centre. It should be noted that the current level of ticket sales along with customer enquires has highlighted that occupancy levels within Council operated car parks are at full capacity. Visitor and employee parking requirements will most likely need to be satisfied through private car park provision at peak times.

Environmental Protection: Initially commented that they recommended a noise assessment is done. On receipt of this no objection. The music level used for assessment is, in my experience in the music industry, at a particularly low level that would not be high enough for your average 'pro' band. That being said with the use of a limiter shouldn't be an issue and easily controlled. There is some concern about the potential impact on the as yet undetermined KWG site which is liable to have a direct line of site, however given limiter control this shouldn't be an issue. Request conditions on external lighting, and contamination.

Cultural Services: Initially requested a sum for Public Art of £50,000. Following confirmation by the applicant that a public artist is involved in the project team raise no objection.

Project office (Drainage): Whilst no specific information in relation to the management of surface water, it is acknowledged that this site is a refurbishment and the site already consists of a fully impermeable area. As such, as a minimum it is requested that soft landscaping / permeable areas are introduced into the scheme and retrofitting of SuDS is introduced into the redevelopment wherever feasible to provide a betterment on the site (As per ABC Sustainable Drainage SPD). The existing drainage systems on the site should be surveyed and current on site surface water infrastructure understood before the detailed design stage of the scheme to assist in establishing where surface water management benefits could be maximised. It should be ensured that there will be no increase in on, or off site flood risk as a result of the redevelopment and any interactions with the existing surface water management systems serving Dover Place Road (and Car Park) should be given due consideration.

Kent Police: In summary state that having reviewed the on line plans and documentation, the applicant/agent has not demonstrated that they have considered designing out crime, crime prevention or have attempted to apply the seven attributes of CPTED in the submitted on-line plans. A meeting to discuss such issues is recommended.

Environmental Services: As this is commercial premises separate arrangements in collection services would be required as Biffa only conduct domestic collection.

However, there's nothing that I can find in the plans for provision of storage for waste containers. Generally for a commercial premises they would require 1100L bins. Design needs to incorporate a bin store that has easy access for staff and servicing.

KCC biodiversity: Initially commented that the accompanying Ecological Appraisal has noted the "*...low potential for bats to make use of the site*", specifically referring to buildings B1 and B2 which both have features suitable for roosting bats. However, the ecological report does not offer a conclusion as to whether further surveys or mitigation measures are needed. All bat species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Buildings on a development site that are considered to have a 'low potential' for bats would usually be subject to at least one emergence and re-entry survey to confirm their presence or absence. The scrub and young trees on-site have been identified as suitable nesting habitat for common birds within the ecological report. As breeding birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), operational works that impact vegetation should only take place outside of the breeding season. Following confirmation from the applicant about the minimal works to areas likely to be inhabited by bats do not require any further information.

Southern Water: can facilitate foul sewerage and surface water run-off disposal to service the development. Suggest the imposition of an informative.

Neighbours: three letters of objection making the following points:-

- This will result in a loss of history (Crofords) and why is the deep cellar not shown on the plans.
- Too much money for a temporary structure (£650, 000) and it could be better spent on more immediate needs such as community education and cohesion projects and even more urgently homelessness with winter setting in.
- Waste of taxpayers money

One letter of support stating it's a great idea to redevelop the area, making better use of the space and providing better, and more varied, public facilities.

Planning Policy

21. The Development Plan comprises the saved policies in the adopted Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000, the adopted LDF Core Strategy 2008, the adopted Ashford Town Centre Action Area Plan 2010, the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD 2010, the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD 2012, the Chilmington Green AAP 2013, the Wye Neighbourhood Plan 2015-30 and the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan 2016-30.

22. The new Ashford Local Plan to 2030 has now been submitted for examination. Following this, the Local Plan Inspectors issued a post-hearings advice note on 29th June 2018 which sets out the elements of the Submission Local Plan that they consider require amendment in order to be found sound. In the context of paragraph 48 of the NPPF, this note provides a material step towards the adoption of the Plan and the weight that should be applied to its policies in decision-making. Where the Inspectors have not indicated a need for amendment to policies in the Plan, it is reasonable to assume that these policies are, in principle, sound and should therefore be given significant weight. Where policies need to be amended as a consequence of the Inspectors' advice, significant weight should be attached to the Inspectors' advice in the application of those policies.
23. On 13 September the Council commenced consultation on the main modifications to the draft plan. This consultation has now ended.
24. The relevant policies from the Development Plan relating to this application are as follows:-

Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000

ET3 – Ashford Employment Core

TP6 –Cycle Parking

Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008

CS1 – Guiding Principles

CS2 – The Borough Wide Strategy

CS3 – Ashford Town Centre

CS7- The Economy and Economic Development

CS9 – Design Quality

CS11 – Biodiversity

CS15 – Transport

CS16 - Retail

CS19 – Development and flood risk

CS20 – Sustainable drainage

Urban Sites Development Plan Document 2012

U0 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan 2010

TC1 – Guiding Principles

Policy **TC9** – The Commercial Quarter

The Commercial Quarter is proposed to play a leading job creation role for the town centre, predominantly from new office development (indicative capacity 55,000 sqm). Other uses, such as small-scale retail and/ or leisure uses (indicative capacity 2,500sqm), alongside residential (indicative capacity 150 units) and community-related development, would also be appropriate in this Quarter, providing they complement the objective to deliver the substantial commercial space envisaged here.

The Quarter should be planned comprehensively and a master-plan for the Quarter including public realm improvements outside the station entrance, shall be agreed with the Borough Council prior to consideration of individual schemes. These will need to demonstrate that they would not prejudice the ability to deliver the indicative quantum of office development.

Development in this Quarter should generally be an average of 5-6 storeys above ground level. In certain locations within the Quarter, development in the order of 10 storeys may be justified. The layout of the Quarter shall enable the creation of pedestrian routes through the area in line with the principles established in the Public Realm Strategy and Town Centre Design SPD.

Development in this Quarter should also help to facilitate and contribute towards the delivery of proposed public realm improvements around the domestic station approach and along Station Road.

TC22 – office, retail and leisure parking standards

TC24 – Cycle Parking Standards

TC25 – Commuted parking

25. The following are also material considerations to the determination of this application.

Ashford Local Plan to 2030 (Submission Version December 2017)

Policy S1 - Commercial Quarter

The Commercial Quarter is proposed to become an important new office based district playing a key role in creating jobs for the town centre and growing the wider economy of the Borough. The site has the potential to deliver up to 55,000 sq m of new office floorspace.

In addition to offices, other secondary uses such as residential apartments, small scale retail and/ or leisure uses and a hotel would also be appropriate in this Quarter, providing they complement the wider objective to deliver the substantial commercial space envisaged here. The site also has the potential to deliver residential apartments. To the northern part of the site, a multi storey car park is envisaged to come forward.

The Quarter should be delivered in phases and this needs to be guided by a 'Design Framework' which may need revising as the Quarter is developed. The quality of the public realm linking the component parts of the Quarter and more widely to the stations and shopping heart of the town centre needs to be of an especially high quality and each phase will need to be designed and delivered with this in mind. Active uses will be needed to help animate key routes and important focal points at junctions.

Development in this Quarter should generally be an average of 5-6 storeys above ground level although slightly taller buildings may be appropriate towards the heart of the site. The riverside frontage should generally not exceed 4 storeys.

Non-residential development in the Commercial Quarter will be required to provide proportionate contributions towards the delivery of strategic parking provision in the town, such as the delivery of a Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Park and / or a Park and Ride site outside the Town Centre area.

SP1 – Strategic Objectives

SP3 – Strategic approach to Economic Development

SP5 – Ashford Town Centre

SP6 – Promoting High Quality Design

TRA3(b) – Parking Standards for Non-Residential Development

TRA5 – Planning for pedestrians

TRA6 – Provision for cycling

TRA8 – Travel plans, assessments and statements

ENV1 – Biodiversity

ENV4 – Light Pollution and Promoting Dark Skies

ENV6 – Flood risk

ENV9 – Sustainable drainage

ENV13 – Conservation and enhancement of Heritage Assets

ENV15 – Archaeology

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Sustainable Drainage (SuDs) SPD

Dark Skies SPD (July 2014)

Government Advice

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018

26. Members should note that the determination must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A significant material consideration is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF says that less weight should be given to the policies above if they are in conflict with the NPPF. The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to this application:-
27. Paragraph 48 states in relation to the stages of preparing a Local Plan that:

“Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);

b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)”
28. Paragraph 80 states that Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and

productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

29. Paragraph 85 encourages planning decisions to “support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation”.
30. Other key points from the NPPF material to the determination of this application are considered to be:
 - (a) Principle of Development
 - (b) Highway Impact of the Proposal
 - (c) Layout and Design
 - (d) Heritage and Archaeology
 - (e) General Landscaping
 - (f) Sustainable Drainage and Flooding
 - (g) Ecology
 - (h) Other Matters

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

31. The National Planning Policy Guidance is also a material consideration and is interrelated to the NPPF.

Assessment

32. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As set out within the policy section, Ashford Borough Council have an adopted development plan, and an emerging plan that can now be afforded significant weight in the decision-making process.
33. This section of the report assesses the proposal in light of all relevant guidance and policy, both adopted and emerging, with a balancing exercise undertaken to provide Members with a recommendation.

34. The main issues for consideration are:

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable within development plan policies and how the provision of the development would impact upon the deliverability of the Commercial Quarter Development Framework.
- Whether the design and layout of the development is acceptable in relation to the impact on the character and appearance of the locality; the grade II* listed warehouse (the impact on the building and its setting), and the impact on the condition through re-use of the two pre-1948 buildings currently on site.
- The impact on the highway network, highway safety, vehicle access and whether there is sufficient parking and cycle provision.
- Whether the development would be harmful to both existing and future residents in terms of residential amenity through noise.
- Whether the development would provide adequate sustainable urban drainage and sewerage disposal arrangements.
- The impact of the development on ecology in and around the site.
- Whether contamination issues can be addressed.
- Any other matters including specific Listed Building issues and neighbour comments.

Principle of Development

35. Saved policy ET3 of the Ashford Borough Local Plan states that high density, office-type business development should be located within the Ashford Employment Core. The Core Strategy seeks to put the creation of sustainable development and high quality design at the centre of the Council's approach to deciding planning applications and sets out a number of criteria for so doing including making best use of previously developed land to help regenerate urban areas and provision of a commercial environment that encourages new business (CS1). Targets are set for job creation (CS2). Development that will help to revitalise the town centre will be supported in principle (CS3). A commitment is given to enabling a range of employment opportunities to be developed (CS7). Retailing in the Town Centre is encouraged and protected (CS16).
36. The development of a Commercial Quarter has featured in the Council's development plan for several years, through the adoption of its Core Strategy in 2008 and more recently the Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan

(ATCAAP) in 2010. The Economic Strategy underpinning this recognises the importance to the town of the Commercial Quarter securing a strong office market within the town close to the domestic and international train stations, with a vibrant commercial centre to take advantage of fast journey times to London and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Policy TC1(B) requires a balance and mix of uses within sites that helps to generate a varied and interesting urban environment that meets the needs of all users.

37. The site lies within the Commercial Quarter as allocated in Policy TC9 of the ATCAAP. TC9 envisages a mix of office and other minor uses such as retail and leisure and requires that given the fundamental importance of delivering significant amounts of new development in this Quarter, development coming forward here must make the best use of land. The Quarter should be planned comprehensively and a master-plan for the Quarter including public realm improvements outside the station entrance, shall be agreed with the Borough Council prior to consideration of individual schemes. This will need to demonstrate that any proposals would not prejudice the ability to deliver the indicative quantum of office development.
38. Such a masterplan was prepared at the time of the approval of the first new commercial block and is undergoing a review as part of the TC work as members will be aware. This proposal will not conflict with the delivery of the agreed levels of office floorspace and indeed delivers some of it. As para. 2.100 of the TCAAP notes complimentary town centre uses are appropriate here particularly small scale restaurant, bar and food and drink.
39. Policy S1 of the Submission Version Local Plan (2017) effectively provides the Council's updated position on this application. This again sets out the requirement of commercial development (of circa 55,000sqm). Existing policies seek to deliver a mix of uses within the Commercial Quarter, including as before small scale retail and leisure uses to complement the other commercial space and in line with a Design Framework.
40. Policy SP1 also aims to focus development at accessible and sustainable locations which utilise existing infrastructure, facilities and services and makes best use of previously developed land. It seeks to provide a range of employment opportunities to respond to the needs of business, support the growing population and attract inward investment. SP3 supports economic development and job creation especially in the TC. In policy SP5 mixed use developments are encouraged.
41. In my view the proposal will achieve the objectives of all of these policies by introducing a range of vibrant new uses into an area that is in need of regeneration. Para. 2.95 of the TCAAP identifies that the Quarter lacks real cohesion and formal character and the area around the station provides a

poor first impression at this key gateway into the town. This scheme is another step towards achieving that vision. The uses proposed accord with the provisions of the Development Plan by providing for both office and retail/leisure uses all of which will create jobs and stimulate spent in the TC. The office proposals will complement the more traditional offer in existing TC offices including the new CQ38 building extending the range of potential occupiers and businesses. The retail/leisure uses will add to the attractiveness of the commercial quarter as a destination and increase dwell time in the TC.

Design and Layout Issues

42. The Core Strategy states that development that will help to revitalise the town centre will be supported in principle but schemes will need to demonstrate a quality of design that contributes to improving the character of the town centre (CS3). Developments must deliver high-quality design through character, distinctiveness and a sense of place as well as other design criteria (CS9). Policy TC1(A) requires that proposals conserve and enhance the Town Centres heritage and character and (E) create a network of public spaces and (F) attractive and vibrant streets. (G) requires the inclusion of public art as an integral part of development proposals. Paras. 2.104 and 2.105 reinforce this. Policy SP6 promotes high quality design and provides a range of criteria for assessing this.
43. The scheme will secure the appropriate restoration of the Corn Store and associated hall in a manner that respects their historic interest. It will result in the recladding of the Youth Theatre in a manner that will secure a visually more pleasing appearance by day and one that will dramatically change the character of the area at night as the whole structure will be lit and therefore act as a beacon to attract customers and be an art work in its own right. As indicated in the description section the proposals for the loggia and yard will result in significant other opportunities for public art and an artist is involved in the design team working up the detail of the proposals.
44. Policy SP5 a) requires that all schemes will need to demonstrate a quality of design that makes a significant contribution to improving the character of the town centre. This includes not just the buildings proposed but the spaces around them and links to the wider public realm. Street frontages of buildings should include active uses that help bring a sense of vitality to the street scene.
45. The scheme will add another component to the emerging Commercial Quarter to which the recently created public realm will lead directly from the car parks and public transport hub at the station. The site presently presents a run-down and closed environment that turns its back on neighbouring uses and streets. The proposals will open up more areas to public view and in time it is hoped to create an entrance onto Station Approach itself subject to land ownership issues being resolved. The approach taken to the design uses low cost

materials to bring back the buildings into use in a cost efficient way given the currently proposed short time span for the project, however the resulting appearance will be very “immediate” and should appeal to particular social groups for example Millennials. The design and uses have been carefully thought through based on examples of projects elsewhere referenced earlier in this report and will offer a dynamic and changing venue depending on the season.

Parking and other Transport Issues

46. The Council seeks to promote public transport and development will need to demonstrate how all forms of transport needs will be met (CS15). Saved policy TP6 states that proposals for employment, shopping and leisure development and for any buildings used by the general public should provide secure cycle parking. TC24 and TRA5 require similar standards the last being based on specific use classes. This can be secured by condition.
47. Policy TC22 sets out parking standards for office, retail and leisure uses. It was envisaged that these standards would be reduced over time as additional TC car parks and park and ride facilities (P&R) were introduced. It was also envisaged that all requirements other than operational parking would be met via commuted payments towards new TC multi storey car parks (MSCP) and park and ride facilities (TC25). These standards have now been superseded by the standards set out in policy TRA3(b) of the LP2030 and the parking requirements set out below are based on these standards. In any event there are no firm proposals to bring forward either a P&R or a MSCP as yet other than the proposed site allocations in the LP2030. As a consequence my view is that policies TC22 and TC25 should now be accorded little weight.
48. Policy TRA3(b) also states that in exceptional cases, the Council may require proposals to depart from the standards if the following apply:-
 - b) In order to take account of specific local circumstances that may require a higher or lower level of parking provision, including as a result of the development site's accessibility to public transport,
 - c) Where an operator or potential occupier requires either more or less parking spaces to cater for their specific operational needs, such requirements can be clearly evidenced and where their presence has wider planning benefits,
 - d) Where the proposed use can reasonably rely on the availability of public off-street car parking spaces that are nearby,
 - g) Should independently verified viability evidence demonstrate that achieving the minimum parking standard identified would render the scheme unviable and that there are overriding planning benefits to justify that the development should proceed.Policy SP5 says a balanced approach to office parking needs will be taken in order to help stimulate early investment in the town centre, whilst considering long term impacts on road capacity and the needs of shoppers, residents and other users
49. In terms of sustainability, the site is considered to be in a highly accessible location (para. 2.94 TCAAP), being within a town centre location, close to the

train stations, other modes of public transport, many public and other car parks (policy U0). Potential clientele are present in adjoining developments for example the Council Offices, Stour Centre, International House, CQ38 etc. and a very significant number of new residential properties are under construction on other Town Centre sites nearby. Over the medium to long term, this development will also compliment the additional employment opportunities anticipated within the remainder of the Commercial Quarter.

50. The application site has no directly associated parking provision and some previously approved parking for the Corn Store would be lost to enable the creation of the loggia and events space. A total of 12 parking spaces were to be provided within the curtilage of the site, in the area currently known as the Yard for the previous use of the Corn Store. Outside of that site's opening hours, 6 of the 12 spaces were to be shared with the adjacent Ashford Youth Theatre (D2 use) however there is some doubt as to whether this actually occurred.
51. In terms of parking demand generated by the current proposal it is necessary to look at the demand that would be generated by the lawful uses the site could be put to. Based on the previous TRICS assessment (and floor area of 457m²), a demand for 10 parking spaces would have been generated for the theatre use. As indicated above it was agreed that the Sui Generis use of the Corn Store generated a need for 12 spaces so the total demand was 22 spaces.
52. The proposed uses generate a demand as follows:-

Proposed Use Class	Parking Demand (spaces)
A3	28
A4	15
B1(a)	26
D2	4
Total	73

53. Notwithstanding this, and as stated within the submitted Transport Statement, the LPA parking standards take no account of the fact that the three proposed uses are within the same curtilage and therefore each separate use will not generate their own independent parking demand.
54. The total provision of 73 spaces assumes that each use is wholly independent from one another and a standalone entity, and does not include an appropriate discount for shared use. By way of an example, during the office opening hours, a high proportion of these users will also be users of the restaurant/café and drinking establishment. As such, one parking space has the potential to serve three separate uses. Therefore the demand of 26

parking spaces generated by the office use will also serve the eating and drinking uses during the day, thus dramatically reducing the overall demand generated by the site. Similarly, the proposed D2 use will act as an extension to the office use and as such will not generate its own parking demand. In any event this assumes no use of public transport to arrive at the destination.

55. Outside office hours, the eating and drinking uses will generate their own demand, albeit the parking demand will likely be shared between both uses. As is the case with the majority of eating and drinking establishments within the centre of Ashford, because no designated on-site parking is provided patrons will either walk, or park within one of the many public car parks within the locality. The proposal will therefore be no different to most other similar TC uses.
56. Following submission of the Transport Statement, it has been confirmed by Officers at Ashford Borough Council (within the Property & Projects department) that two disabled bays will be made available within the nearby International House for use by the proposal. International House is served from Dover Place and is approximately 90m from the application site entrance.
57. With regard to the comments made by Parking Services it is understood that reference to Council car parks being at capacity refers to a survey carried out during a specific and narrow time-band and that these car parks are often less well used during the evening hours (when car parking for the proposed uses is in greater demand) and there is thus capacity. Given the nature of adjoining streets and the existence of CPZ's in residential areas it is unlikely that the proposal would give rise to any on-street parking and thus highway safety concerns.
58. The recent physical survey of Council car parks was carried out on 28 September 2018 between 1000hrs and 1100hrs and the occupancy results for car parks closest to this proposed development were as detailed below:

	Excluding Disabled Bays	Including Disabled Bays
Dover Place	100%	95.93%
Station Road	100%	93.97%
Stour & Civic Centre	87.99%	84.96%
Vicarage Lane	90.06%	86.80%

59. In conclusion, the site is located within Ashford town centre with good access to two nearby public car parks (Dover Place and Stour Centre) which have capacity, the station car parks and other means of sustainable transport. Significant numbers of other public car parking spaces are available within a few minutes walking distance. The level of available car parking and public transport alternatives within this location therefore makes the development

particularly sustainable and accessible. Car parking cannot be provided on site without significantly affecting the operational needs of this scheme and without detracting from its merits. In my view the TA makes the case for not requiring on-site provision as required by policy TRA3(b) and given this I am satisfied that the absence of any on-site parking is acceptable.

60. Policy TRA5 requires that safe pedestrian access is achievable to the site. Pedestrian access will be from Dover Place and footpath routes off road are available from all directions.

Residential Amenity

61. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF indicates that planning decisions should create a high standard of amenity for existing and future residents affected by any new development. There are a small number of existing residential flats over the Pizza outlet facing Station Road and over the Everest Inn. At present there are no other residential properties within the immediate surrounds of the application site, and as such the impact upon existing residents within the town centre is minimal. That said, it is also important to consider the quality of life for future residents within the development. Policy TC1(C) requires that residential environments and quality of life be protected.
62. The Council's Environmental Protection officer has advised that the low levels of anticipated noise from performances etc as set out in the noise assessment should not use an issue for residents subject to the imposition of a condition requiring a noise limiter.

Sustainable Drainage, Flood Risk and Sewerage Disposal

63. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy seeks to locate new development outside floodplains and to ensure that any development does not increase the risk of flooding. Policy CS20 requires all development to include appropriate sustainable drainage systems. This scheme is too small to require a formal Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The site lies outside any defined floodplain and no new buildings or hard surfaces are proposed that would increase the amount of surface water run-off. Nevertheless the existing surface water drainage system is currently unclear and the opportunity should be taken to investigate this and see if there are opportunities to reduce the rate and quality of run-off through simple attenuation devices in line with policy ENV6 and the SPD. A condition is proposed.
64. Para. 2.108 of the TCAAP identifies the need generally for sewerage disposal arrangements to be upgraded for the Quarter as a whole and SWS have identified that they can meet the needs of this development in both foul and surface drainage terms. Again a condition is proposed.

Ecology

65. Proposals should avoid harm to biodiversity interests and wherever practicable deliver their enhancement (CS11). Policy ENV1 – Biodiversity says that proposals that conserve or enhance biodiversity will be supported. Opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity should be identified.
66. The proposal will have a very limited impact on some self-seeded flora on site and new planting may form part of the setting out of the yard/events area. Initially KCC biodiversity were concerned about potential impact on bats that may be present in the Corn Store however when the detail of the minimal works to that building was outlined advised that they had no concerns. Notwithstanding this it is recommended that opportunities are taken to introduce further breeding boxes on facades where possible

Contamination

67. There is a limited possibility of disturbance to below ground areas being caused by the proposed works and therefore a precautionary approach is advised through the imposition of a condition given the proximity of water courses.

Any other Matters

68. Section 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 set out general duties of the LPA in respect of listed buildings and conservation areas in exercise of planning functions. In the case of Section 66, it seeks to ensure that where development affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This is reflected in adopted policies CS1 and emerging local plan policies ENV13 and ENV14. Policy SP1 c) requires proposals to conserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and the relationship between them and their settings in a way that promotes distinctive places, proportionate to their significance. Place-based heritage will be a key principle underpinning design and spatial form of development;
69. In my view the proposals will not impact upon the setting of the Listed Building to the west. The proposals are the refurbishment of existing buildings in the main and the additional structures and alternative materials proposed will not detract from the more prominent LB in the street scene. As set out above the heritage interest of the Corn Store will be preserved and enhanced.
70. With regard to the comments received from residents no cellar has been found in the Corn Store building and the proposals will ensure that a building

of Heritage interest is preserved and brought back into an active and appropriate use. The matter of whether the monies being spent on the scheme is an appropriate use of public funds is not a matter for this committee although it should be noted that the budget has been kept to the lowest possible levels consistent with bringing the buildings back into an appropriate active use.

71. With regard to the comments by Kent Police policy SP1 d) requires proposals to create the highest quality design which is sustainable, accessible and safe. A meeting has been arranged with Kent Police to discuss any specific concerns they may have and to advise on proposals for CCTV.
72. Policy ENV4 – Light Pollution and Promoting Dark Skies states that all proposals will be expected to comply with the guidance and requirements set out in the Council's Dark Skies SPD (2014). Given the nature of the uses involved significant external lighting will be required however this can be designed in such a way as to minimise upward pollution and to ensure that lighting levels are as low as possible when the site is not in use.

Human Rights Issues

73. I have also taken into account the human rights issues relevant to this application. In my view, the "Assessment" section above and the Recommendation below represent an appropriate balance between the interests and rights of the applicant (to enjoy their land subject only to reasonable and proportionate controls by a public authority) and the interests and rights of those potentially affected by the proposal (to respect for private life and the home and peaceful enjoyment of their properties).

Working with the applicant

74. In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and creative manner as explained in the note to the applicant included in the recommendation below.

Conclusion

75. In conclusion I consider that the principle of development is acceptable and accords with adopted and emerging development plan policies ET3, CS1, CS2, CS3, CS7, CS16, TC1, TC9, S1, SP1, SP3 and SP5. The provision of the development would not impact upon the deliverability of the wider

Commercial Quarter Development Framework as currently exists and as proposed to be amended.

76. I consider that the proposed design and layout of the development accords with adopted and emerging development plan policies CS3, CS9, TC1, SP6, and SP5. The scheme is acceptable in relation to the impact on the character and appearance of the locality; the grade II* listed warehouse (the impact on the building and its setting), and the impact on the condition through re-use of the two pre-1948 buildings currently on site and will visually enhance the appearance and functioning of the area and add to the offer in the Town Centre.
77. The impact on the highway network, highway safety, vehicle access and whether there is sufficient parking and cycle provision has been considered in relation to policies CS15, TP6, TC24, TRA5, TRA3(b), UO and TRA5 and is considered to accord with those adopted and emerging policies. The proposal does not accord with policies TC22 and TC25 which in my view should be accorded little weight as they have been superseded by emerging policy TRA3(b) which is at an advanced stage.
78. The proposal will not be harmful to both existing and future residents in terms of residential amenity through noise generated and accords with policy TC1 (C).
79. The proposal can provide sustainable urban drainage and sewerage disposal arrangements in accordance with policies CS19, ENV6 and the adopted Suds SPD.
80. The proposal has an acceptable impact on ecology in and around the site and accords with policies CS11 and ENV1.
81. Contamination issues can be addressed via a condition.
82. Listed Building impact issues have been assessed and no harm has been identified. Neighbour comments have been taken into consideration but none of the matters raised lead to an alternative recommendation. External lighting can be controlled. Policies CS1, ENV13, ENV14, SP1 and ENV4 and the Dark Skies SPD are satisfied.

Recommendation

Permit

Subject to the following Conditions and Notes:

1. Standard time condition
2. Provision of cycle parking
3. Details of existing and proposed surface water drainage.
4. Details of proposed sewerage disposal arrangements
5. Details of all external lighting.
6. Details of any external signage.
7. Hours of use.
8. Noise limiter to be installed.
9. Materials and surfacing treatment.
10. Investigation and control of contamination.
11. Uses to be in accordance with those applied for - no change of use.
12. Ecological enhancement.
13. CCTV.

Note to Applicant

1. Working with the Applicant

In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF Ashford Borough Council (ABC) takes a positive and creative approach to development proposals focused on solutions. ABC works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by;

- offering a pre-application advice service,
- as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application
- where possible suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome,
- informing applicants/agents of any likely recommendation of refusal prior to a decision and,
- by adhering to the requirements of the Development Management Customer Charter.

In this instance,

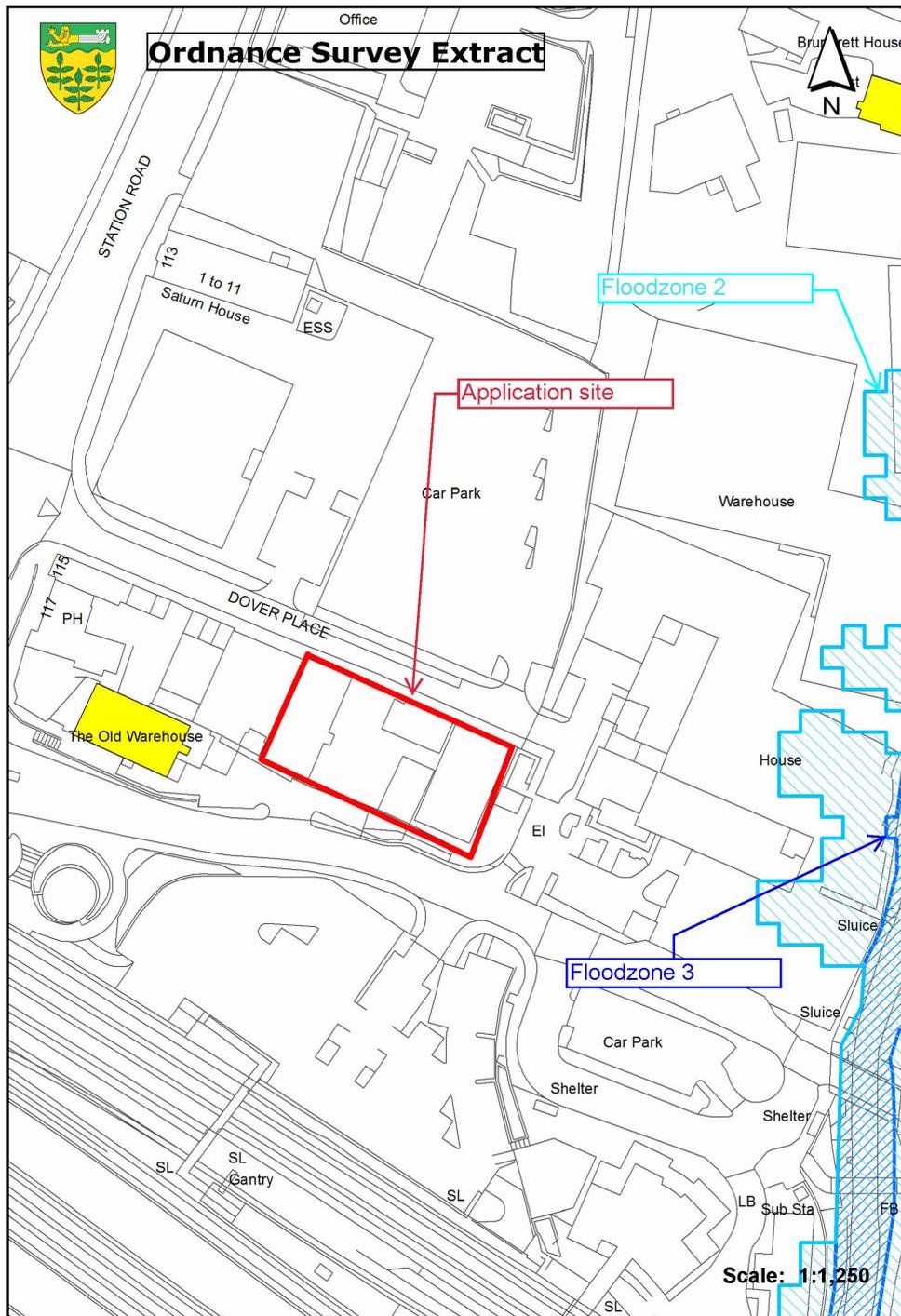
- the applicant/agent was updated with issues after the initial site visit,
- was provided with pre-application advice,
- The applicant was provided the opportunity to submit amendments to the scheme/ address issues.
- The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the application.

Background Papers

All papers referred to in this report are currently published on the Ashford Borough Council web site (www.ashford.gov.uk). Those papers relating specifically to this application may be found on the [View applications on line](#) pages under planning application reference 18/01369AS)

Contact Officer: Lois Jarrett
Email: lois.jarrett@ashford.gov.uk
Telephone: (01233) 330246

Annex 1



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