



Maidstone Local Plan Examination

Response to Employment Update

Prepared on behalf of

**Harvestore Systems
(Holdings) Ltd**

**February 2017
DHA/11105**

1 Response to Employment Update

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 The Inspector has issued a limited consultation on an Employment Update paper issued by Maidstone Borough Council following the Inspector's Interim Findings Report. Whilst the consultation is proposed to be limited to those participating in Hearing Session 8 (Employment), three pages of the report are devoted to amendments to Policy RMX1(1), the area covered by which is controlled by Harvestore Systems (Holdings) Ltd, who participated in Hearing Session 9.

1.1.2 Given that the Employment Update paper directly affects my client, it is only reasonable that they should be offered the opportunity to respond.

1.2 Office provision

1.2.1 Paragraphs 2.26 to 2.30 of the Employment Update refer to the allocation of Newnham Park for a medical campus of up to 100,000 sqm, of which approximately 25,000 sqm will be for associated offices and research and development.

1.2.2 The paper explains that the existing consent on the site limits occupation of the office/research and development buildings to those occupiers directly related to the provision of medical services. For that reason, the Council is choosing not to count the consented floorspace towards the general requirement for office supply.

1.2.3 An application has been submitted to effectively renew the outline consent, which received a resolution to grant planning permission on 2nd February 2017. Despite objections from the applicant, that consent contains a similar condition restricting the occupation of the office/R&D floorspace.

1.2.4 The Council is now proposing a Main Modification to add a paragraph to the supporting text to RMX(1) and to the policy itself suggesting that the site's suitability for an element of non-medical B1(a/b) uses should be assessed at the next Local Plan Review.

Proposed Alternative Approach

1.2.5 My clients agree that the Kent Medical Campus is capable of making a contribution towards the general need for office floorspace. Whilst it is clear that the primary purpose of the site is as a medical campus, my client believes that there would be significant advantages in allowing a proportion of the office to be occupied by non-medical companies. We believe these advantages exist now, and there should be no need to wait until the next Local Plan Review to consider this.

1.2.6 The reasons for this can be summarised as follows:

- The original planning consent sought to restrict use of the office buildings because the proposal was, at that time, contrary to the Local Plan by virtue of being located outside the urban area. With the new Local Plan showing the site as being within the urban area, that reason for restricting the use no longer applies;

- The Kent Medical Campus is being promoted and marketed as a hub for medical uses and related businesses. In reality, we continue to fully expect the majority of office/R&D floorspace to be taken up by occupiers directly related to the provision of medical services. However, the current wording of the condition would prevent other businesses who would benefit from being co-located with medical companies from occupying the KMC facilities, even though such co-location would be mutually beneficial.
- As an example, Discovery Park, near Sandwich, has established itself as a leading science and technology park but has also attracted businesses from other fields, such as law firms, marketing companies and recruitment companies, who benefit from being co-located with and help to serve science and technology companies. These are mutually beneficial relationships which in turn help the local economy. They should be encouraged, not restricted by unnecessary conditions.

1.2.7 We fully understand that the Council has allocated the site as a medical campus and it wishes to see it developed as that. My client shares that vision. However, for the reasons set out above, we consider that allowing a small proportion of the office floorspace to be occupied by non-medical companies would allow greater flexibility as explained above.

1.2.8 We are open to discussion on how “a small proportion” could be defined. We suggest that the policy limits the amount of non-medical office floorspace to 2,500 sqm, that being 10% of the total office floorspace proposed. This would allow greater flexibility and help the site to contribute to the Council’s wider need for office floorspace without harming the overall purpose of the site as a medical campus.