

Kings Hill
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567710 156279 28 July 2008

TM/08/02086/RM

Proposal: Details of Reserved Matters being; access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale submitted pursuant to planning permission TM/05/00163/FL: 3 storey B1 development with separate energy centre building with car parking and security gate (resubmission of TM/07/03969/RM)

Location: 1 Jubilee Way Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4UW

Applicant: Rolex Watch Company Limited

1. Description:

- 1.1 These revised Reserved Matters applications relate to a new business development to be used as an administrative centre for watch storage and distribution plus servicing/repair workshops currently under construction.
- 1.2 The main building and associated works was approved by Committee in February 2008. It will be 3 storeys high and the top floor will include a roof garden screened by a parapet wall. The approved detached energy centre building had 2 floors of accommodation with the lower floor at basement level.
- 1.3 Illuminated car parking for 123 vehicles and 30 cycles is still to be provided. The landscaping is largely as approved (block paving, water features and seating areas) but additional tree planting is now proposed in the corner of the site nearest the New Barns Conservation Area.
- 1.4 The boundary fronting the access road is still proposed to be planted with landscaping plus gates 1.5m high and 13m wide that will slide open behind the hedge during normal office hours.
- 1.5 The main building will have 2 external facades of curtain walling: the outer in a green tint with in front of a green grey glazed curtain walling with green grey spandrel panels. The other facades will be glazed curtain walling with charcoal grey/black spandrel panels plus chestnut timber louvres. The building as a whole is designed with high levels of energy efficiency in mind.
- 1.6 The main change in this application is the loss of the silver/white vertical wave frit patterns on the outer skin of glass. Further clarification on the need for the change has been obtained from discussions with the architects. It is understood that the loss of the frit pattern is considered to be of vital importance for the internal light environment for the watchmakers in particular. The activity of the watchmakers requires intense visual acuity and concentration and the architects argue that this would be unacceptably disturbed by distracting shadow patterns inside the building if the external frit pattern were to remain.

- 1.7 The architects have also stated that the outer glass to be used is a unique product in terms of its thermal resistance to overheating and that there is no comparable product that can be obtained in a different colour, hence the proposed use of the green grey background glass/panels.
- 1.8 The energy centre has external facades of polyester powder coated panels in charcoal grey/black. This has had to be increased in size as investigations since the February approval has revealed that there is not scope to take as much ground source heat as had been anticipated. The enlargement will be screen by a landscaped fence.

2. Reason for reporting to Committee:

- 2.1 Level of local interest.

3. The Site:

- 3.1 The site is 2.6 ha and is mostly formerly orchard, the fruit trees having been cleared recently. To the south is a copse of woodland on the northern side of Tower View.
- 3.2 To the north, east and west are undeveloped areas of former orchard, plus areas of copse and lines of Poplar shelterbelts.
- 3.3 The site slopes from SE to NW but the average ground level is approx 75m OD.
- 3.4 The definitive line of a PROW runs along the north-west boundary of the site. This was previously in the boundaries of the site, but the application site has since been modified to exclude it.
- 3.5 The north-eastern boundary of the site is some 500m from the edge of the hamlet of New Barns, a Conservation Area with a number of listed buildings.
- 3.6 The access road known as Jubilee Way is almost completed. It runs along the eastern and north-eastern boundaries of the site and includes 2 mini roundabouts leading to other potential development areas within Kings Hill.

4. Planning History:

TM/07/03969/RM Approved 20 February 2008

3 storey B1 development with separate energy centre building and associated landscaping and car parking (approval of reserved matters TM/05/00163/FL).

TM/08/01270/RD Approved

28 May 2008

Details of external lighting control and management submitted pursuant to condition 2 of planning permission TM/07/03969/RM: 3 storey B1 development with separate energy centre building and associated landscaping and car parking (approval of reserved matters TM/05/00163/FL).

5. Consultees:

5.1 West Malling PC: No comments.

5.2 Kings Hill PC: No objections subject to no left-in/left-out junction to the A228.

5.3 KHS: No new highways issues from the amendments.

5.4 DHH: No comments.

5.5 Private Reps + site and PROW press notice: (15/4R/0S/0X) Objections are as follows:

5.5.1 We are satisfied by the boundary planting that in the long term will provide partial screening. Our objections to the building itself still stand. The fact that it is a reserved matters approval means that there is general consent for commercial premises to be built on an area of which the application is a sub-site. All reserved matters applications should still meet the general planning policies and guidelines and the specific Kings Hill policies laid down by TMBC which we do not believe that this building does: this building will be intrusive beyond Kings Hill, it will negatively impact our nearby conservation area which has its inward and outward views protected by planning policy; the planning committee agreed at the last meeting that it was a sensitive site, in fact one of the most sensitive sites on the whole Kings Hill estate; the revised plans have removed the fretwork that gave the committee some comfort that the outline might be somewhat broken up when viewed from afar.

5.5.2 The sample of glazing confirms our fears that the elevation will be highly reflective, given the almost mirror-like reflection of the buildings opposite the glass sheets. We believe that the applicant should be required to adhere to the originally intended frit work for safety reasons and to reduce the adverse visual impact of the building on the surrounding landscape.

5.5.3 I am extremely concerned about the final outward appearance of the Rolex Building in what is meant to be a rural area. The proposed glazing panels will cause unnecessary glare and reflection for drivers on the A228 and for all who live in the close proximity.

- 5.5.4 The previous objections and concerns of New Barns hamlet residents are still relevant. These concerns were recognised and taken into consideration by committee members. In particular there was discussion surrounding both the possible negative visual impact of the main building on the overall landscape given that it is a near-boundary development situated in a rural area and the likely impact on the New Barns conservation area.
- 5.5.5 Given the landscape and conservation area setting to be treated sensitively, it was felt that the exterior frit work on the West and East elevations of the building was crucial to softening its visual impact both on the countryside and landscape in general and in reducing the impact on New Barns in particular e.g. the materials are dark coloured facades with frit work that will be a mix of colours mainly black/dark grey/green. The officer report considered that this use of materials and the colours to be used will be the most effective in created a subdued visual impact.
- 5.5.6 We were therefore distressed and disappointed to learn that the proposed frit work on the West and East elevations is replaced by a metal framework over glazed panels, this would lead to a negative visual impact of the building in the wider landscape as viewed from the New Barns conservation area, the A228 approach and from further a field.
- 5.5.7 Such an external appearance could create unacceptable and unsafe glare from Lavenders Road bridge, Lavenders Road (to the west of the bridge) and from the New Barns Oast drive in particular. We do not believe that the proposed poplar planting to the North East boundary of the Rolex site would have any impact from these vantage points.
- 5.5.8 The bunding which will be established along the north/east boundary of the Kings Hill site, should not be used as a reason for granting permission for changes to the external appearance of the site.
- 5.6 We are also disappointed to see that it appears that the applicant has not accepted the invitation to consider a reduction in slab levels to minimise the visual impact of the building.
- 5.7 We strongly urge the Council to reject the changes to the exterior appearance of the building and to require the applicants to revert to the original plans for the frit work.
- 6. Determining Issues:**
- 6.1 In the light of the February 2008 approval of reserved matters, the issues relevant in this application are limited to the changes: additional tree planting; a larger energy centre and the loss of a frit work pattern and change in colouring of the main east and west elevations of the building.

- 6.2 The landscaping changes will serve in the long term to screen the development from the residents of New Barns and Members will note this change is supported by the private representations received.
- 6.3 The enlargement to the energy centre comes about from an unforeseen constraint of using ground source energy. Any extra length/bulk is to be screened by landscaped enclosures to each end and therefore no objections are raised.
- 6.4 The issue of contention if the change in materials to the 2 main elevations. As has been highlighted by the objectors, this was a matter which I discussed in some detail in the February 2008 report.
- 6.5 Since that report, Policy P2/2 of the TMBLP has been superseded by Policy E1 of the Development Land Allocations. This requires, *inter alia*, development in Kings Hill not too impact on rural amenity by visual intrusion. Other policies referred to in the February Report are still valid: Policies TM1 and QL1 of the KMSP and Policy CP24 of the TMBCS in terms of design and impact on the locality and Policies QL6 and QL8 of the KMSP and PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) relating to the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and the setting of listed buildings respectively.
- 6.6 As before, the main building reflects the established bulk of similar office complexes on Tower View.
- 6.7 The approved materials were dark coloured facades with frit work that would have been a mix of colours mainly black/dark grey/green. It was considered that those materials and colours would be the most effective in creating a subdued visual impact in the surrounding rural area as they help the building blend in with its setting when it is viewed against tree-scape that is predominantly green with black shadows in the summer and brown with black shadows in the winter.
- 6.8 It is the case that the loss of the frit work will alter the visual mix of colours and there will no longer be an external vertical pattern that would resemble trees. However, the external glass does have a green tint and I have no reason to doubt the architect's assertion that this is the only option for the external curtain glazing that will be adequately environmentally sustainable to combat solar heat gain. The inner layer will be a mix of grey-green coloured glass and grey-green panels and I remain of the opinion that, viewed in combination, the palette of colours seen externally will be sufficiently subdued and appropriate for the location of this building.
- 6.9 I share the disappointment of the objectors that the frit-work pattern on the glass is being lost as the new elevations are architecturally less interesting. Rolex have sought formal approval for the amendment. That does indicate to me that they have weighed up the issues and likely objections but have still decided that the impact of the frit-work on the internal conditions in the workshop is detrimental enough to seek a fresh approval of Reserved Matters.

6.10 Members will be aware that planning decisions have to be made on their individual merits, that is whether the external materials now being submitted are acceptable *in their own right*, notwithstanding any previous approval for a different treatment. Whilst Members may feel that the revision will be architecturally less interesting, I would advise that the palette of colours (grey and green-grey) is adequately subdued for the proposed location of the site at the edge of Kings Hill, close to, but not abutting, the rural area. I therefore recommend approval.

7. Recommendation:

7.1 **Approve Reserved Matters** as detailed by: Certificate B dated 03.07.2008, Letter dated 03.07.2008, Notice dated 03.07.2008, Letter dated 28.07.2008, Elevations VIEW FROM SOUTH WEST dated 28.07.2008, Site Plan 1813(PI)102 P2 dated 03.07.2008, Location Plan 1813(PI)104 P7 dated 03.07.2008, Floor Plan 1813(PI)111 P9 dated 03.07.2008, Floor Plan 1813(PI)112 P8 dated 03.07.2008, Floor Plan 1813(PI)113 P6 dated 03.07.2008, Floor Plans And Elevations 1813(PI)114 P3 dated 03.07.2008, Elevations 1813(PI)125 P5 dated 03.07.2008, Elevations 1813(PI)126 P8 dated 03.07.2008, Section 1813(PI)135 P7 dated 03.07.2008, Section 1813(PI)136 P6 dated 03.07.2008, Plan 1813(PI)150 P2 dated 03.07.2008, Landscaping WT1265L01 K dated 03.07.2008, Landscaping WT1265L02 F dated 03.07.2008, Landscaping WT1265L03 G dated 03.07.2008, Design and Access Statement dated 03.07.2008, Report dated 28.07.2008.

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