

To: Head of Planning,
Kirklees Council

Service: Business & Economy

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Re: Planning application references 2025/91122W and 2025/65/91645/W

Dear Sirs,

I write in my capacity as Head of Business and Skills at Kirklees Council in support of the proposed redevelopment of the Turnbridge Mills complex, located off Old Leeds Road in Huddersfield, to facilitate the relocation of Paxman Coolers Ltd.

The Council's Business team – externally branded as Business Kirklees – is working to support the economic growth potential of the health and life sciences sectors in Kirklees and Paxman Coolers is one of our most innovative and fast growing SMEs in this space. These comments have been submitted to provide additional information and clarity on the economic and public benefits brought about by this scheme, including the proposals alignment with national, regional and local strategic economic objectives.

Context: West Yorkshire's health and life science sectors

Paxman Coolers Ltd is an integral part of an innovative and rapidly growing health and life science 'ecosystem' in West Yorkshire. The future economic growth potential of the health and life sciences highlighted in both the Government's Life Sciences Sector Plan (part of the Industrial Strategy) and West Yorkshire Combined Authority's HealthTech Cluster Plan.

West Yorkshire's health innovation ecosystem is based on a unique concentration of NHS/clinical and research expertise and innovative SMEs alongside larger businesses, including one of the largest teaching hospitals in Europe. West Yorkshire's acknowledged innovation clusters include digital health; medical devices; diagnostics and personalised healthcare; pharmaceuticals and drug discovery; medical services and hardware/consumables.

Strengths in in data science, software development and AI underpin these capabilities. In particular, West Yorkshire has been identified as a global leader in HealthTech, with over 300 firms specializing in digital health, medical devices, and diagnostics generating over £3bn per annum in revenues and employing over 16,000 people.

The opportunity for growth of the health and life sciences sectors in Kirklees are highlighted in the Kirklees Inclusive Economy Strategy that was adopted by the Council in July 2025. Established manufacturing businesses including STADA Thornton and Ross (pharmaceuticals) and Syngenta (agri-business/life sciences) sit alongside innovative, fast growing SMEs like Paxman Coolers Ltd. The University of Huddersfield's National Health Innovation Campus, referenced in more detail below and overleaf, is a key driver of the future growth of health and life sciences in Kirklees and is a key factor in the proposed relocation of Paxman Coolers.

Recent research for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority by international property consultancy CBRE¹ further highlighted the opportunity for the growth of MedTech – including medical devices and assistive technologies – and related advanced manufacturing capability in Huddersfield, linked to the National Health Innovation Campus. The report further reinforces the opportunities associated with clustering of research facilities, innovative businesses, workspace and wider leisure/cultural offer to support business collaboration, talent retention and inward investment.

The proposed relocation of Paxman Coolers Ltd, one of West Yorkshire's key MedTech businesses, is strongly aligned with the strategic growth opportunities highlighted by CBRE. We provide more information about the business in the following paragraphs.

Paxman Coolers Ltd

Paxman Coolers Ltd, based in Huddersfield, is a global leader in scalp cooling technology that helps reduce chemotherapy-induced hair loss. Since its founding in 1996, over 100,000 patients across 50+ countries have benefited from its flagship product—the Paxman Scalp Cooling System (“cold cap”). This system lowers scalp temperature during chemotherapy to limit drug absorption in hair follicles, helping patients preserve their identity and emotional well-being.

Paxman has also established a Scalp Cooling Research Centre at the University of Huddersfield, advancing research in hair follicle biology, topical treatments, and 3D-printed cooling caps. As noted earlier its long-term relationship with the University of Huddersfield is a key driver of the businesses decision to co-locate alongside the NHIC.

Paxman is strategically expanding its innovation pipeline beyond scalp cooling, partnering with the National University of Singapore to develop a breakthrough solution for chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) – nerve damage in the hands and feet. Backed by strong financials, Paxman AB—listed on Nasdaq Stockholm—reported over £12.6m in turnover for 2024, marking a 19% year-on-year increase, and now employs more than 70 staff.

I believe that the proposed relocation of the business to the Turnbridge Mills site will result in very low displacement of jobs and investment; Paxman Coolers has experienced significant (15%+) year on year growth in turnover since 2022 and the proposals aim to provide expansion space to facilitate continued expansion, driven by export sales.

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In addition, the relocation of the business from its current premises in Fenay Bridge will in turn support the expansion of another important local advanced manufacturing business (Reliance Precision), which occupies a site opposite the current Paxman premises and plans to move its new product development and innovation functions into this building as part of wider expansion plans.

Alignment with national, regional and local strategic economic and spatial priorities

Alongside the strategic importance of the health and life sciences to the growth of the West Yorkshire economy and the important contribution of Paxman Coolers to the emerging cluster, the site at Turnbridge Mills lies within the Station to Stadium Enterprise Corridor and the West Yorkshire Investment Zone (IZ).

IZs are central to delivering the Government's Industrial Strategy, with only eight across England. Each will unlock £160 million in public investment over ten years to drive private sector growth and job creation through university-led R&D. West Yorkshire's IZ focuses on the health tech and digital sectors, with Huddersfield's Station to Stadium Corridor among just three areas in the region benefiting from this status.

Investment Zone status is a key driver for inward investment and SME growth, anchored by the University of Huddersfield's National Health Innovation Campus. The seven acre NHIC site has planning permission for up to seven buildings and up to 75,000 m² of accommodation and is being built to international WELL building standards - one of only 30 WELL-at-scale sites worldwide and the first of its kind in the UK.

With the first building completed on site in 2024 and the second scheduled for completion in early 2026, the NHIC will deliver a mix of specialist clinical teaching and research facilities, laboratories, and flexible innovation floorspace packed with the latest tech for those businesses seeking to develop an in-depth relationship with the University. The NHIC will also be home to the first NHS Community Diagnostic Hub colocated on a UK university campus, enhancing its role in public health and clinical services.

The Station to Stadium Corridor Masterplan – adopted by the Council in 2022 – envisages that the health and life sciences, anchored by the NHIC, can drive the regeneration of the area including Old Leeds Road through the development of complementary land uses. To realise the clustering benefits outlined overleaf, it is essential that the IZ programme delivers a significant increase in the availability of laboratory space, manufacturing and office space within the Station to Stadium Corridor. The proposed relocation of Paxman Coolers will make a significant contribution to both of these objectives.

Availability of suitable sites/premises

As noted, JL Brierley's Turnbridge Mills site lies within a nationally designated Investment Zone focused on the health and life sciences which in turn forms part of the Council's Station to Stadium Enterprise Corridor.

In addition, in seeking to relocate and expand its operations Paxman Coolers has highlighted the importance of co-location with the University of Huddersfield as a result of its longstanding research and innovation relationships and to support the clustering effect cited overleaf.

The applicant has detailed their efforts over a number of years, preceding IZ status, to identify viable alternative uses for the William Hirst Mill and other buildings within the complex. Whilst I do not intend to revisit the issues relating to the use and viability of the mill here, it is important to consider the availability of other site/premises options for Paxman Coolers within the Station to Stadium Corridor and elsewhere in Huddersfield.

I am aware that the business is seeking to relocate during 2026 as there are some timing constraints relating to the disposal and decant of their existing premises and also in relation to the availability of grant funding to support their proposed relocation through the Investment Zone programme. I consider the latter subject in the final paragraphs of this letter.

The Business Kirklees team is acutely aware of a significant under-supply of readily available industrial sites/premises in and around the Investment Zone and more widely across the Huddersfield sub-market. I have appended a report from the CoStar property information system detailing the availability of leasehold premises within 1.5 miles of Huddersfield town centre and the NHIC; this shows that there are currently no existing leasehold premises available which meet Paxman Cooler's requirements of approximately 25,000 sq. ft of floorspace. Some of these premises, as well as being too small, are also unlikely to meet Paxman's requirements for modern, high quality floorspace in line with its reputation as an innovative and mission-led business.

The Huddersfield Investment Zone is centred on two key sites – the National Health Innovation Campus, which is a focus for teaching, research and public health facilities – and the adjoining development site at Gasworks Street which will provide a focus for manufacturing and other businesses seeking to be based within the IZ and co-locate with the University.

I understand that Paxman Coolers entered into negotiations with the University of Huddersfield regarding potential relocation on the NHIC site. However, the project, which is manufacturing-focused, does not fit with the University's preferred mix of land uses within the campus. A floor of innovation space is being developed within the Emily Siddon building on the campus, opening in 2026 but no further commercially available floorspace is currently being planned by the University.

The 7 acre site at Gasworks Street, which was transferred to the ownership of Kirklees Council in September 2025, has secured an in-principle commitment from WYCA to provide funding for site remediation and infrastructure provision, subject to business case approval. These works will de-risk the development of the site and a private sector partner will be sought in mid-2026 to develop the site in accord with the objectives of the Investment Zone.

Whilst this will result in a very significant improvement in the supply of land for high quality employment uses in the Station to Stadium Corridor, it will not be available for development within the timeframe required by Paxman Coolers and was not in Council ownership when the planning applications for Turnbridge Mills were submitted. As such the site at Gasworks Street cannot currently be considered a realistic alternative site to meet Paxman's requirements. The Turnbridge Mills site represents the only current and viable solution.

Investment Zone funding

The applicant has argued that a range of other options have been considered for the retention or partial redevelopment of the Mill and that none of these are viable. They further state that the proposed scheme, involving the provision of bespoke premises to be leased to Paxman Coolers is unviable without a significant Investment Zone grant. The Council has commissioned independent advice on the viability of these options.

A business case has been submitted for WYCA and I understand that the project will be considered by the full WYCA committee in December 2025. I understand that WYCA's own appraisal of the preferred (Paxman) scheme is also likely to confirm that this is not commercially viable without a substantial IZ grant to meet the shortfall between development values and costs. I am also advised that WYCA are unlikely to support a speculative funding bid and that Paxman Coolers role in the project and the wider economic benefits that this will unlock are central to their support.

In summary I wish to reiterate my strong support for what is a very significant project within Huddersfield's Station to Stadium Corridor and for the West Yorkshire Investment Zone. In the event that planning permission is granted, Paxman Coolers will play a key role in the future development and growth of the health and life sciences cluster and in the wider regeneration of the Corridor.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Duffill
Head of Business & Economy
Business Kirklees