

PLANNING REPORT

Site Name : Former Post Office sorting office, 12 North Street,

Site Location : Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7DF

Combined Planning and Design & Access Statement to vary planning permission APP/19/00638 to allow change of use of first and second floors to C3 (2No. 1 bedroom apartments) and A2/B1a Uses (Business/Financial Services) and to change the use of building r/o 12 North St from Sui Generis to ancillary A1/B1a/A2/A3 (Shop/Business/Financial and Professional Services/Food and Drink) use connected to the Ground floor use of 12 North St.



On behalf of

Mr Glenn Conwell

December 2019

Job Number C/0033/2

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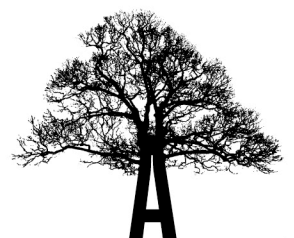
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Plans

1. Existing & Proposed Site Plans
(Drawing no. 550-19-01).
2. Proposed Plans & Elevations–
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(Drawing no. 550-19-103).



Combined Planning and Design & Access Statement to vary planning permission APP/19/00638 to allow change of use of first and second floors to C3 (2No. 1 bedroom apartments) and A2/B1a Uses (Business/Financial Services) and to change the use of building r/o 12 North St from Sui Generis to ancillary A1/B1a/A2/A3 (Shop/Business/Financial and Professional Services/Food and Drink) use connected to the Ground floor use of 12 North St, Emsworth.

1.Introduction

1.1.Background.

1.1.1.This statement has been prepared to support a planning application to vary planning permission APP/19/00638 to allow change of use of first and second floors to C3 (2No. 1 bedroom apartments) and A2/B1a Uses (Business/Financial Services) and to change the use of building r/o 12 North St from Sui Generis to ancillary A1/B1a/A2/A3 (Shop/Business/Financial and Professional Services/Food and Drink) use connected to the Ground floor use of 12 North St,

1.2.Planning History.

1.2.1.The site the subject of this application comprises an early Edwardian (1906) three storey building fronting onto North Street, with brick elevations under a pitched slate roof. The original building steps down from 3 to 2 storeys towards the rear. The premises has been in continuous use as a Royal Mail sorting office (Sui Generis Use) prior to it becoming vacant in recent years.

1.2.2.Planning Permission was granted on 10th October 2019 to “Change the use part of ground floor from Sui Generis (Sorting Office) to mixed use A1/B1a/A2/A3 (Shop/Business/Financial and Professional Services/Food and Drink). Change of use of first and second floors to create 2No. 1 bedroom apartments. Demolition of chimneys and creation of five parking spaces to rear.”

1.3.The Site and its surroundings.

1.3.1.The application site covers approximately 0.0415ha (415m²). To the rear of the main building is a further single storey profiled metal roofed extension constructed in the 1950s, which it is proposed to renovate and convert into ancillary A1/B1a/A2/A3 use classes floorspace to that recently consented for the ground floor of the main 3 storey building.



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1.3.2. Plan 1 includes an Ordnance Survey Extract which shows the location of the site at 1:1250 scale. The site itself lies on the western side of North Street, circa 100m to the north of the roundabout onto the main A259 Havant Road. This section of North Street comprises mainly “High Street” offices, cafes and restaurants interspersed with shops. There is a Tesco Express convenience store opposite, with Emsworth Fire Station immediately to the south, beyond this to the south is Emsworth Museum, and a small surfaced, council owned car park. There is a further, larger public car park opposite, and accessed via Palmers Road.

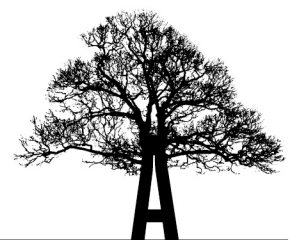
1.3.3. Emsworth is described thus in the emerging Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version April 2019:

“The district centre of Emsworth is a vibrant retail centre, situated to the south of the railway, to the north and south of the A259. It is characterised by a high proportion of independent shops, and a range of restaurants and public houses which support a lively night-time economy.”

1.4. Description of the Development.

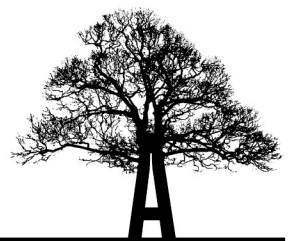
1.4.1. The existing consent APP/19/00638 (granted 10th October 2019) allows for the change of use of the ground floor of the 3 storey former sorting office into a flexible range of uses appropriate to the existing role of this part of Emsworth as a District Service Centre. This application seeks to secure consent for the change of use of the rear outbuilding to ancillary floorspace to the ground floor, so as to enhance the prospect of securing a viable ground floor user.

1.4.2. The existing consent also allows for the conversion of the first and 2nd floors into one bedroom apartments, albeit that implementation of that consent is currently prevented until such time as condition 3 (provision of a mitigation package addressing the additional nutrient input arising from the upper floors residential development) can be discharged subject to resolution of ongoing negotiations between the Local Planning Authority and appropriate bodies. To this end this application seeks to extend the owners immediate options for securing a viable first and second floor user by varying the existing consent to also allow the option of A2/B1a use of the first and second floors.



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1.4.3. It can be demonstrated that adequate on site parking provision can be achieved to accommodate both net office floorspace created on the first and second floor and the additional ancillary floorspace created by change of use of the outbuilding.



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2.Case in Support of the Application

2.1.Introduction

2.1.1.The proposal has the potential to provide additional business/office floorspace as well as supporting the return of the ground floor of the former sorting office into an active retail/commercial frontage.

2.1.2.This statement will go on to demonstrate that the proposal is compliant with existing National and Local policies. Any potential development constraints will be identified and addressed where necessary.

2.1.3. The report “Havant Borough Council – Business Needs, Site Assessments and Employment Land Study – May 2016”, by Lambert Smith Hampton recognises at para 3.22 that along the M27 corridor in general *“With office availability along the M27 corridor standing at just over 1.3 million sq ft at the end of 2015, there is currently less than 3 years supply, based on the current rate of take-up.”*, and at 3.25 *“Moreover in Havant Borough, it is worth noting that over an extensive number of years, the incidence of new office development is very limited”*. The proposal therefore makes a modest yet well needed contribution to meeting overall need for additional office space in both the Council area and the sub-region.



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3.Planning Policy.

3.1.Planning Framework.

3.1.1.The following sections will provide an analysis of key policy issues that impact on this proposal.

3.2.National Guidance.

3.2.1.The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019.

3.2.2.The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, “The Framework”) was introduced into the planning system in March 2012, replacing previous published national planning policy and guidance with a more concise document. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has subsequently been issued to clarify some provisions of the NPPF for practitioners. The revised National Planning Policy Framework was updated on 19 February 2019 and sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

3.2.3.The NPPF sets out the Governments requirements and strategy for economic, environmental and social planning policies in England. The NPPF emphasises that the Government expects the planning system to deliver homes, business space and infrastructure.

3.2.4.General Principles.

3.2.5.Framework paras 10 and 11 state:

10 - “So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development “

11- “For decision-taking this means

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or



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d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. “

3.2.6.Implications for the determination of this application.

3.2.7.In terms of the current application, this statement will go on to demonstrate that the proposal is compliant with the principals set out in the NPPF, particularly in terms of securing sustainable development, and meeting the business needs of the district centre, without impacting or diminishing features of acknowledged importance.

3.2.8.Because, as this statement will go on to demonstrate, the local policy framework is a quite complicated framework of adopted and emerging Local and Neighbourhood Plans, this statement will identify all relevant policies and what weight can be attached to them. Because none of the Local Plans have the full weight of Framework Para 11c, it may be the case in some instances that it is the Framework that has material weight.

3.2.9.Building a strong competitive economy.

3.2.10.Framework para 80 provides (inter alia) 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. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.”



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3.2.11.Implications for the determination of this application.

3.2.12.The Framework is strongly supportive of proposals that support local business growth including meeting their accommodation needs. The proposal provides an opportunity to improve the quantity and quality of business space in the centre of Emsworth.

3.2.13.Ensuring the Viability of Town Centres.

3.2.14.Framework para 85 provides (inter alia) that:

“Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:

a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;

d) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;“

3.2.15.Implications for the determination of this application.

3.2.16.The Framework recognises the benefits of, and supports, proposals that bring flexible opportunities to bring new and diverse users (including office and business users) into existing town centres.



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3.2.17.Proposals affecting heritage assets.

3.2.18.Framework Para 192 provides:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. “*

3.2.19.Implications for the determination of this application.

3.2.20.The proposal site, while being a fine Edwardian building dating back to the turn of the 20th Century, is not a designated asset, it is not Statutorily Listed. The Framework however recognises clear merit in bringing non-designated heritage assets such as this back into viable and beneficial use.



3.3.Local Policy.

3.3.1. The Havant Local Plan covers the whole of the Borough of Havant, including Emsworth. This comprises the Core Strategy (2011) and Site Allocations Plan (2014), and sets out the policies which will determine planning decisions across the borough. In order to achieve conformity with Framework Para 11c, both Development Plan Documents are currently subject to review by way of the preparation of the Havant Borough Local Plan 2036.

3.3.2. The emerging Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 has passed its pre-submission consultation stage and has yet to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The emerging Local Plan's Examination is expected in the Autumn of 2019.

3.3.3. In April 2019 the Emsworth Neighbourhood Forum published the submission version of the Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan for consultation, prior to submission for Independent Examination later this year. This neighbourhood plan has been informed by the strategic policies in the adopted Havant Local Plan, made up of the Core Strategy (2011) and the Allocations Plan (2014) against which it needs to be in general conformity, and also has regard to the emerging Havant Borough Council Local Plan 2036.

3.3.4. Adopted Havant Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2011) and adopted Havant Local Plan (Allocations) document (July 2014).

3.3.5.Policy CS2 Employment.

3.3.6. Adopted Core Strategy Policy CS2 states (inter alia, with my emphasis) that

"The council will to seek to accommodate flexibly a net total of 162,000 square metres of new employment floorspace between 2006 and 2026 as follows:

- 75,000 square metres of B1 offices
- 45,500 square metres of B2 manufacturing
- 41,500 square metres of B8 warehousing.



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*Planning permission **will be granted** for development proposals that:*

- 1. Prioritise the use of previously developed land for the provision of new employment floorspace.*
- 2. Favour town centre locations for the provision of B1a offices and other town centre uses."*

3.3.7. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.8. Policy CS2 is positively worded and permissive, seeking to both increase net B1 floorspace in the District, and to direct B1a office use to existing town centres. This proposal is wholly compliant with Policy CS2, contributing to additional B1 (and A2) floorspace provision, and as a B1a use, is located within an existing centre in accordance with the second criteria.

3.3.9. Policy CS4 Town, District and Local Centres.

3.3.10. Adopted Core Strategy Policy CS4 identifies Emsworth as a District Centre, and seeks to promote the vitality and viability of this and other identified centres in line with government policy. The inset map for Emsworth District Centre at Appendix 5 of the adopted Havant Local Plan (Allocations) document (July 2014) shows the proposal site as being within the District Centre boundary.

3.3.11. Policy CS4 is again positively worded and permissive, stating that (inter alia, with my emphasis):

*"Planning permission **will be granted** for appropriate town centre development proposals that:*

- 2. Enhance the evening economy of the town and district centres.*
- 4. Support small and independent businesses.*
- 5. Encourage high quality, mixed-use development in designated centres that retain active ground floor frontages."*



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3.3.12.Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.13.The current application achieves the aims of all three relevant criteria, supporting the potential to introduce an active ground floor frontage by way of providing additional ancillary floorspace to that recently consented at ground floor level, and offering office floorspace suitable for small and independent businesses. As for enhancing the evening economy, A2/B1a office and business users will most likely patronise local bars and restaurants after working hours, thereby maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the existing centre as a whole.

3.3.14.Policy AL3 Town, District and Local Centres.

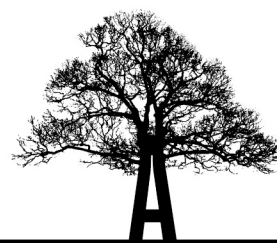
3.3.15.The inset map for Emsworth District Centre at Appendix 5 of the adopted Havant Local Plan (Allocations) document (July 2014) shows the proposal site as being located within a defined secondary frontage. Allocations document policy AL3 is again positively worded and permissive, stating that, inter alia (again with my emphasis):

*“Planning permission **will be granted** for development proposals that:*

1. Provide main town centre uses in the town, district and local centres as defined on the Policies Map, and so contribute to their vitality and viability.

3.3.16.Implications for the determination of this application.

It is considered that A2/B1a office and business use at first and second floor level are “main town centre uses” for the purposes of Policy AL3, and the proposal will indeed enhance the vitality and viability of the existing centre in terms of increasing the numbers of people working in the centre of Emsworth, frequenting local shops, restaurants and bars at lunchtimes and after work, etc.



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3.3.17. Emerging Havant Borough Local Plan 2036.

3.3.18. Emerging Local Plan policy C4 seeks to retain the vitality and viability of the North St area within which the application proposal sites. North St continues to be designated as a secondary shopping area. C4 states, inter alia:

“C4 Emsworth District Centre

Development proposals in Emsworth District Centre will be permitted where:

- a. Ground floor uses have active frontages to promote and enhance the vitality and viability of the district centre;*
- b. Proposals maximise opportunities for residential (C3) and office (B1a) development above ground floor units where appropriate;*
- c. The detail and layout of a proposal is informed by the context and setting of Emsworth Conservation Area;*
- d. Local farmers' and other specialist markets are supported and where possible enhanced; and*
- e. Any rationalisation of parking retains sufficient car and cycle parking to serve the needs of the district centre;*

Outside the Primary Shopping Area

Development proposals outside of the Primary Shopping Area will be permitted where:

- h. Community, healthcare uses (D1), and main town centre uses (except offices (B1a)) are proposed at ground floor level; or*
- i. They enhance the evening economy and/or tourist offer of Emsworth.”*



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3.3.19.Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.20.Policy C4 has limited material weight as the emerging Local Plan has still to undergo Examination in Public. It essentially reiterates policies CS4 and RL3 of the adopted Local Plan 2011–2014, and the application proposal seems highly compliant, particularly in terms of supporting returning the application site to an active ground floor frontage (criteria h) and providing B1a office floorspace at first floor and second floor level (criteria h).

3.3.21.In terms of criteria i), Office workers and visitors are likely to patronise and therefore support existing cafe's, bars and restaurants in this part of Emsworth centre, including into the evening.

3.3.22.Emerging Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan.

3.3.23. The Emsworth Neighbourhood Forum aspire to the area surrounding the application site becoming a “public service hub” and the emerging Neighbourhood Plan defines an area that contains the former Victoria Cottage Hospital site, the Emsworth Community Centre, the Old Post Office (the application site), the Fire Station and The Hole in the Wall Pottery. Emerging POLICY C1 Community & Public Services Hub seeks to deliver this:

“a) Support will be given for planning applications for the development of health or social care facilities on the former site of Victoria Cottage Hospital.

b) If applications for such uses do not come forward on this site, a mix of community and public services will be supported with particular emphasis on ground floors.

c) Applications for a public library, nursery or other social or cultural service that enhances social integration in the proposed public service hub will be supported.”



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3.3.24. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.25. While the aims of policy C1 to create a “public service hub” are laudable, this policy is purely aspirational, there being no committed funding nor delivery vehicle in place. For this reason this policy and the “public service hub” are very likely to be deleted from the final adopted Neighbourhood Plan at Independent Examination as such aspirational enabling policies inherently fail to meet basic conditions. There are therefore no grounds for refusing the current application on the basis of this policy, in the vague hope that a community user might emerge. Of course should the applicant be approached with a viable proposition by such a user, any consent granted could be easily varied to accommodate such use.

3.3.26. Emerging POLICY C2 Retail, High Street & Food / Drink Uses builds upon policy C4 of the Emerging Local Plan:

“Land use classes A1 (shops and retail outlets), A2 (professional services), A3 (food and drink) & A4 (drinking establishments) will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they add to a safe, vibrant and attractive street scene. Appropriate locations are as follows:

- High Street & St Peter’s Square
- North Street & South Street “

3.3.27. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.28. While the application proposal for B1a use at first and second floor is outside the schedule of supported uses under policy C2, it is inferred that Policy C2 only seeks to address ground floor frontage uses, and hence would not prevent upstairs office floorspace.



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4.Design and Access

4.1.Background

4.1.1.The purpose of the Design and Access Statement is to communicate the design process and considerations that have informed this scheme, and also how the design considers the accessibility of the site.

4.2.Context

4.2.1.Existing buildings/structures on and surrounding the Site

4.2.2.The site itself covers approximately 415m². It is currently occupied by an early Edwardian (1906) three storey building fronting onto North Street, with brick elevations under a pitched slate roof. The original building steps down from 3 to 2 storeys towards the rear. To the rear of the main building is a further 110 m² single storey profiled metal roofed extension constructed in the 1950s. It is the latter that is the subject of the proposed change of use to ancillary floorspace to the consented ground floor use. A site location plan is included as Plan 1.

4.2.3.The site itself lies on the western side of North Street, circa 100m to the north of the roundabout onto the main A259 Havant Road. This section of North Street comprises mainly “High Street” offices, cafes and restaurants interspersed with shops. There is a Tesco Express convenience store opposite, with Emsworth Fire Station immediately to the south, beyond this to the south is Emsworth Museum, and a small surfaced, council owned car park. There is a further, larger public car park opposite, and accessed via Palmers Road.

4.2.4.Landform & topography

4.2.5.The application site is level, there are no land stability issues, and no development is proposed that would give rise to a need for land raising or any other change in ground levels.



4.3.Existing Access

- 4.3.1.The town of Emsworth is located close to the A3M and South Coast Trunk road and is within a short driving distance of both Portsmouth and Chichester.
- 4.3.2.The application site is easily accessible. The application site is directly accessed by vehicles off North St, the existing access onto the highway will be retained.
- 4.3.3.Pedestrian and cycle access would be most likely from along the well lit North St frontage. The sites location offers quick, safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling access to local shops and facilities.
- 4.3.4.A cycle route strategy has been implemented in Emsworth, especially to provide more protected routes to schools.
- 4.3.5.Emsworth is well-connected by rail. There are regular services to Chichester, Brighton, London Victoria and Gatwick, Havant, Portsmouth and Southampton (all direct) with a regular well used service to London Waterloo (via Havant). Recent changes to the station infrastructure mean that it now has full access for all passengers.
- 4.3.6.Stagecoach South operate the number 700 bus which operates between Brighton and Southsea. Local bus services are provided by Emsworth & District, which operate services to Havant and Chichester, linking the town to Leigh Park, Rowlands Castle, Westbourne and Havant, including a shopper service to local large supermarkets. There are currently two national operators and a local family business offering public transport to and from Emsworth.



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5.Design Principles

5.1.Development Requirements

5.1.1.The application site is a characterful Georgian former post office sorting office, that is currently vacant. It therefore offers excellent potential for refurbishment and conversion to offer a range of active ground floor commercial uses appropriate to its location within a secondary shopping frontage. The upper floors offer opportunities for conversion to provide units of self contained residential accommodation.

5.1.2.The proposal is to seek permission for change of use of the ground floor to offer marketing potential for as wide a range of commercial uses as possible. While it is considered a shop/High St use, a restaurant or office use would all be entirely appropriate and maintain the vitality and viability of this shopping frontage, a hot food takeaway (A5) or bar (A4) have been avoided as incompatible with upstairs residential use and the amenity of any surrounding residential occupants.

5.1.3.The 5 existing vehicle parking spaces are to be retained and already allow for adequate turning and manoeuvring space.

5.1.4.Plan 1 attached illustrates the proposed site layout.



5.2.Appearance

5.2.1.The application is for change of use and no material alterations are proposed at this stage, particularly to the ground floor frontage. Because the aim is to market the ground floor space (including the ancillary floorspace to the rear) with as flexible a range of uses as possible, it must be recognised that some options, for instance ancillary A3 restaurant use in the rear building, may require a subsequent application for external alterations to provide extraction etc. For this reason submitting detailed drawings of the A3 option are seen as premature and have not been submitted with this application.

5.3.Crime Prevention

5.3.1.The development creates a safe and accessible environment where crime and disorder and fear of crime will be minimised through the consideration of natural surveillance and lighting arrangements. Bringing a currently vacant building back into re-use has obvious potential benefits in terms of avoiding dereliction, unauthorised access, and any long term deterioration of the surrounding streetscape that might result from long term vacancy.

5.4.Sustainability & Green Design

5.4.1.Environmental.

5.4.2.The main aim will be to produce a development that will be sustainable in term of energy usage and building fabric longevity. Where opportunities arise to improve insulation and heat retention through internal alterations, replacement doors and glazing etc, the development will meet and where possible exceed building regulations so as to make the apartments, in particular, notably affordable in terms of utility bills etc.

5.4.3.Given the town centre location and easy access to public transport, the proposed development is unlikely to give rise to any unsustainable increase in private car journeys.



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5.4.4.Social.

5.4.5.The proposal provides 2 units of office floorspace, helping to contribute to identified employment needs for office accommodation.

5.4.6.Economic.

5.4.7.By way of bringing a currently vacant ground floor space back into a beneficial High St usage, the proposal will contribute to maintaining the vitality and viability of this area of Emsworth District Centre, and the wider District Centre as a whole.



6.Access Principles.

6.1.Access and parking

6.1.1.It is proposed to retain and upgrade the existing access onto the highway between 12 and 14 North St to allow for access to the existing parking area to the rear of the property. In accordance with "Havant Borough Council Parking Supplementary Planning Document July 2016 (Partially updated September 2019)" there will be two parking spaces maintained for the commercial use at ground floor, plus one per for each of the first and second floor offices (first floor creates 53m.sq net office floorspace, second floor creates 30m.sq net office floorspace for each of the one bedroom apartments. 2 additional integral parking spaces will be included in the rear building to accommodate the 71m.sq ancillary floorspace provided. In total the proposal will secure 7 parking spaces, in compliance with the Parking SPD.

6.1.2.In addition to on site parking provision for staff and customers, it should also be noted there is ample of street parking in the locality, there are three off-street car-parks in the town: South Street (105 places), Bridge Road (52 places) and Palmers Road (117 places), the latter being only 150 metres, 2 minutes walking time from the application site. Two are regulated with a minimum charge for a one hour stay. Bridge Street is free. There is also on-street which is regulated, the majority with a maximum waiting time of 45 minutes.

6.1.3.As discussed at section 4.3 above, the site is highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Cycle storage provision will be provided on site.

6.1.4.All internal configurations will comply with Building Regulations Approved Document Part M, 2004 edition that includes access to and into the dwelling, circulation within the unit, and accessible electrical switches and sockets and W.C provision.



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