

Planning Policy Comments

Application No	APP/20/00068
Address	12 North Street, Emsworth, PO10 7DF
Development	Change of use 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 B1a/A2 (Business/Financial and Professional Services).
Case Officer	TP
Comments By	JB
Date of Comments	25 February 2020

POLICY STATUS

The [Local Plan \(Core Strategy\)](#) and the [Local Plan \(Allocations\)](#), together with the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan form the development plan for the borough. The [Pre-submission Havant Borough Local Plan 2036](#) (HBLP 2036) was approved by the Council on 30 January 2019 and can be afforded limited weight.

In addition, the Emsworth Forum submitted their neighbourhood plan to the borough council in April 2019. The examination to place during 2019, and the examiner's report was received in January 2020. It recommends that, subject to a number of amendments, the plan meets the basis requirements and should be sent to referendum. The council has decided to send the plan to referendum. The emerging neighbourhood plan may therefore also be afforded some weight.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Emsworth District Centre

This site falls within the Emsworth District Centre as defined by Policies CS4 and AL3 of the adopted local plan. These policies seek to promote main town centre uses, in order to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre, with a focus on shopping uses, particularly in those parts of the centre defined as the primary shopping area. Similar aims are carried forward into the Pre-Submission Local Plan 2036, in policy C4 Emsworth District Centre. In both plans, the application site lies outside of the primary shopping area.

High quality, mixed-use development that retains active ground floor frontages is supported in principle across the centre in the adopted Local Plan policy CS4.

Under the emerging policy, development proposals in the town centre outside of the primary shopping area are supported where:

- Proposals maximise opportunities for residential or office at upper floors
- Ground floor uses have active frontages
- Community, health care and main town centre uses (except B1a) are proposed at ground floor
- They enhance the evening economy and/or tourist offer of Emsworth.

Business (B1(a) / A2 use at upper floors

The proposal is for business use above on the first and second floor. High quality, mixed-use development that retains active ground floor frontages is supported in principle across the centre in the adopted Local Plan policy CS4, and the business use at upper floors is

therefore considered to be in line with that plan. Proposals that maximise opportunities for office at upper floors are also actively supported in the emerging plan Policy C4.

Commercial Use of ground floor frontage

The application proposes A1/B1a/A2/A3/ uses at ground floor. All of these are town centre uses, but in the emerging Local Plan B1a office uses are specifically excluded from the list of acceptable ground floor uses. Under the adopted plan, proposals are encouraged which support small and independent businesses. A small unit for A1, A2, A3 or B1a use could be considered to support this aim. An A3 use also has the potential to enhance the evening economy and/or tourist offer of Emsworth, which is an aim of the emerging Local Plan.

However, that plan can be given only limited weight at this time. This includes the restriction on B1a uses in the emerging plan. In any case, it must be noted that permitted development rights exist for the change of use of small scale A1 or A2 uses to B1a. Therefore, even if this use was not proposed now, there would be no control over a later change.

The emerging Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan seeks to create a community hub in this area, under policy C1. The proposal for A1/A2/A3/B1a is unlikely to meet this requirement, although this does of course depend on the nature of the end user, which could have a community focus or not. The Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan, in Policy H3, also seeks the retention of this building, which is seen to have historic character, architectural merit and strong local interest. Bringing it back into use will help achieve this aim. Similarly to policy C1, preferred uses under Policy H3 are public or community uses. Again, this will depend on the end user, but A1, A2 and A3 uses can certainly be considered public. The neighbourhood plan more generally supports A1, A2 and A3 uses in North Street, where it can be demonstrate that they add to a safe, vibrant and attractive street scene.

Overall, the proposed range of uses on the ground floor is considered appropriate, as town centre uses are support in this location in principle, and the more restrictive emerging policies may be given only limited weight at this moment in time.

Loss of last use

It is worth noting that Policy DM2 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to prevent the loss of community services and facilities, including shops, and Policy DM3 protects employment (B class uses) or tourism uses. Both policies set requirements for marketing to see whether alternative occupiers can be found before the loss of the use is accepted. The last use of the building was a sui generis royal mail sorting office. Unlike a post office counter this is not considered to be a community use or local shop to which policy DM2 would apply. Similarly, policy DM3, which protects employment uses, is also not deemed to be relevant, given that the policy wording restricts the requirements to B class uses. I therefore consider that under the adopted local plan, there is no requirement for marketing, and I note that none has taken place.

DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

Design

Both the adopted and the emerging local plan require high quality design in all development, and consideration of the historic environment under policies

- CS16 High Quality Design (Core Strategy) and
- E1 High Quality Design (HBLP2036)
- DM20 Historic Assets (Allocations Plan)

- DM21 Shopfronts, Signs, Security Shutters and Advertisements (Site Allocations)
- E13 Historic Environment and Heritage Assets (HBLP2036)

On this tight site, the relationship with surrounding uses is crucial in terms of the design and configuration of the development.

The emerging Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan includes a suite of design policies, and a design checklist, which may be given limited weight in decision making.

Parking & Access

Parking standards apply under the adopted and the emerging local plans (see Parking Standards SPD).

7 spaces are to be provided – 5 external and 2 internal via roller shuttered entrance at the rear of the building. In accordance with comments made on the previous mixed commercial and residential scheme, it is accepted that this is sufficient. However, it must also be considered:

- Whether, in a historic building anew opening with roller shutter to facilitate parking is acceptable
- Whether there is sufficient turning space on site (The emerging Local Plan policy IN4 requires vehicles to leave and enter the highway in forward gear (Policy IN4 of the HBLP2036)).

It is acknowledged that the requirements for parking provision, and the consideration of the impacts on the historic building, and for turning on site may have to be balanced.

Conclusion

In policy terms, the key consideration is whether the proposal supports and enhances the vitality and viability of Emsworth District Centre.

The office use at upper floors is supported in principle, subject to detailed development management considerations. The proposed ground floor uses, though partially contrary to emerging policy, are also considered appropriate on balance.

This in principle support will need to be considered alongside detailed amenity and design considerations.