

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 support a Planning Application to change the use of the ground floor (including single storey building to the rear) and first floor to use class E ((a) shop, (b) cafe and restaurant, (c) professional services, g(i))office) and convert second floor to mixed use class E (a, b, c, g) and Sui Generis Beauticians.



On behalf of

Mr Glenn Conwell

October 2021

Job Number C/0033/3

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background.

- 1.1.1. This statement has been prepared to support a planning application to change the use of a former post office sorting office (Use Class Sui Generis) at ground floor (including single storey building to the rear) and first floor to use class E ((a) shop, (b) cafe and restaurant, (c) professional services, g(i))office) and change the use of the second floor to mixed use class E (a, b, c, g) and Sui Generis beauticians.

1.2. The Site and its surroundings.

- 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.
- 1.2.2. 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.
- 1.2.3. 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.
- 1.2.4. Emsworth is described thus in the adopted Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan September 2021:

“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.”



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1.3. Planning History.

- 1.3.1. Two consents have been granted for the change of use of the property since 2019, both of which are extant, although neither has been implemented:

APP/19/00638: “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 2 No. 1 bedroom apartments. Demolition of chimneys and creation of five parking spaces to rear.”, granted 10 October 2019.

APP/20/00068: “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) and ancillary storage. Change of use of first and second floors to B1a/A2 (Business/Financial and Professional Services). New folding vehicular door in west elevation.”, granted 21 April 2020.

- 1.3.2. The Use Classes Order was amended in September 2020 to revoke the A Class (Town Centre) Uses and subsume these and elements of B (Business) and D (Non residential institutions) within a new E “Commercial, business and service” use class. I consider that as a result of these changes, the 2020 permission effectively granted the applicant a broad E class use of the front building. However, implementation has been prevented by limiting the single storey rear building to ancillary storage use only, the ground floor being too small in area to attract potential tenants, who had all desired to use the rear building as part of operational floorspace. The requirement to include an internal shuttered parking bay in the rear building has also proved a deterrent. It is also the case that the prospective tenant at second floor is a Sui Generis use.
- 1.3.3. The aim of this application is to accommodate the two prospective tenants who will introduce appropriate, thriving and viable town centre uses into the building, while ensuring that if their tenancy ends the building can have as flexible use as possible to maintain it as active town centre floorspace.



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1.4. Description of the Development.

- 1.4.1. A tenant has already been secured for the ground floor of the building, a fused glassware and arts and crafts shop, with the rear single storey building proposed for occasional craft workshops, and manufacture of produce. On site manufacture will be limited to use of two small electric kilns (of a comparable size to an under counter refrigerator and powered off mains sockets) to produce glass products, which, I would submit, is a de minimus element compared to the predominant retail use, although the inclusion of a very prescribed and limited Class E g(ii) light Industrial use in the description of the development is quite acceptable to the applicant if the Council so wish.
- 1.4.2. A tenant has been secured for the second floor of the building, a beautician specialising in in Micropigmentation, Beauty and Aesthetics. This will include beauty therapy like facials, potentially Botox and fillers, lashes, nails, massage etc. Micropigmentation (also referred to as Permanent Make Up, Semi-Permanent Make Up, Cosmetic Tattooing, Microblading etc), requires the use of disposable needles, as would Micro needling facials, Botox and injectable fillers. Such clinical waste and sharps will be removed by a specialised company. Occasional teaching/training in small groups for both beauty and micropigmentation are also proposed.
- 1.4.3. The above processes do not involve hazardous chemicals, rather standard and medical grade disinfecting products such as Distel, Clinel etc wipes for sanitising.
- 1.4.4. Should the either tenant surrender their lease, the ground and first and second floor are required to maintain a flexible range of potential future uses within use class E, appropriate to the existing role of this part of Emsworth as a District Service Centre.
- 1.4.5. It can be demonstrated that adequate on site parking provision (5 car parking spaces) can be achieved to accommodate the proposed uses.



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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 town centre floorspace through facilitating to conversion of the former sorting office into an active town centre frontage use.
- 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.



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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) 2021.

- 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 in July 2021 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. It expects the planning system to promote strong and vibrant communities.

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

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:



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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. **Ensuring the Viability of Town Centres.**

3.2.10. Framework para 86 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;



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3.2.11. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.2.12. The Framework recognises the benefits of, and supports, proposals that bring flexible opportunities to bring new and diverse users into existing centres.

3.2.13. Making effective use of land.

3.2.14. The Framework, at paras 119 and 120, provides that :

“119 - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land.

118 - Planning policies and decisions should (inter alia):

d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, ...”

3.2.15. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.2.16. The Framework promotes and supports the re-use of under utilised buildings in town and district centres, which the current proposal seeks to achieve.



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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.



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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 was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government for examination on 12 February 2021.
- 3.3.3. The Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan was adopted, or 'made', by the Borough Council on 22 September 2021. It now forms part of the development plan for the area and will be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 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 CS4 Town, District and Local Centres.
- 3.3.6. 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.
- 3.3.7. Policy CS4 is 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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3.3.8. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.9. The current application achieves the aims of all three relevant criteria, certainly introducing an active ground floor frontage, and offering floorspace suitable for small and independent businesses. As for enhancing the evening economy, the proposed uses, including a fused glassware and arts and crafts shop, with learning/teaching space, and a beauticians, office and business users will most likely patronise these facilities after working hours, thereby maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the existing centre as a whole.

3.3.10. Policy AL3 Town, District and Local Centres.

3.3.11. 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. Retain at least 25% of the units in an unbroken run of secondary frontage as defined on the Policies Map in retail (A1) use.

Exceptions to parts (3) and (4) may be made to allow a change of use to non-retail if more than 25% of units in the unbroken run of frontage are vacant at the time of the application.”

3.3.12. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.13. It is considered that all the uses at ground, 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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3.3.14. Policy AL3 has been made somewhat redundant by the abolition of the A Use classes. The proposal does include a former A1 shop use at ground floor level, and a Sui Generis use beautician at second floor level, which is certainly a complementary use in a town centre area. To note, although it will be difficult to control the composition of the secondary retail frontage on the west side of North St, which includes the application site, now that nearly every unit essentially falls within the new E class, the frontage currently comprises 13 unit frontages including the application site, with the following breakdown of former A class uses:

Vacant – 1 Unit, (the application site) – 7%

A1 – 4 Units – 30%

A2 – 1 unit – 7%

A3 – 6 units – 46%

Sui Generis – 1 unit – 7%

Once the ground floor frontage of the application site come into former A1 use, this will achieve 38% of the frontage in former A1 use, well above the 25% minimum required in criteria 3. Should it go into a use other than former A1, this would not result in existing former A1 uses falling below the 25% minimum.



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3.3.15. Emerging Havant Borough Local Plan 2036.

3.3.16. 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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3.3.17. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.18. 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 returning the application site to an active ground floor frontage (criteria a) and providing appropriate town centre uses at first floor and second floor levels.

3.3.19. It should be noted that Policy C2 only seeks to address ground floor frontage uses, and hence would not prevent upstairs non retail/town centre office floorspace, essentially all uses within use class E . The description of the proposal however limits the range of uses within Class E so as to prevent this occurring.

3.3.20. **Emsworth Neighbourhood Plan Sept 2021.**

3.3.21. 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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3.3.22. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.23. 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. 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.

3.3.24. POLICY C2 Retail, High Street & Food / Drink Uses provides:

“a) Insofar as planning permission is required proposals for commercial, business and service uses (class E), and pubs or other drinking establishments on High Street, St Peters Square, North Street and South Street will be supported.”

3.3.25. Implications for the determination of this application.

3.3.26. The application proposal is clearly supported by the Neighbourhood Plan in terms of the schedule of acceptable uses laid out in policy C2. A Sui Generis beautician use is considered a wholly complementary town centre use.



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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 single storey profiled metal roofed extension constructed in the 1950s. 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.



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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, including the nearby public car park off Palmers Road.
- 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 commercial uses appropriate to its location within a secondary shopping frontage, including conversion of the upper floors.
- 5.1.2. The proposal is to seek permission for change of use of the ground, first and second floor to both accommodate the prospective ground floor and second floor tenants and to offer potential for as wide a range of appropriate town centre commercial uses as possible at first floor level (and other floors should they become vacant in future if tenancies are not renewed). The proposal also seeks to extend E class usage into the rear single storey building currently limited to “ancillary storage” in the extant 2020 permission. None of the uses proposed are considered in any way incompatible with the town centre location of the property and will have no adverse impacts on 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.



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5.2. Appearance.

5.2.1. The application is for change of use and no material alterations are proposed, particularly to the ground floor frontage. Because the aim is to market the ground floor space with as flexible a range of uses as possible, it must be recognised that some potential future options within E class, particularly E (b) cafe/restaurant use, would require a subsequent application for external alterations to provide extraction etc. For this reason submitting detailed drawings of E (b) options 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.

5.4.3. Given the town centre location and easy access to public transport and town centre public car parks, 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 will maintain the application site in active beneficial use, thereby helping to maintain the long term vitality and viability of Emsworth town centre. The learning component of the glass ware and arts and craft shop will provide a community facility that will also encourage people to spend longer periods in Emsworth town centre. The beauticians will be a facility offering “pampering days” etc. Both proposals are considered very much in line with emerging modern retail trends, where in order for existing centres to remain competitive with online retailing, successful centres are evolving to offer a more varied experience where shopping is combined with leisure, dining, “experiences” such as spa and beauty treatments etc.

5.4.6. Economic.

5.4.7. The proposal will result in a range of modest local wealth generating and employment creating use. The glass ware and arts and crafts shop will offer a facility for local crafts people to market their goods and produce, and will also host occasional craft markets further opening up the potential for micro businesses such a craft jewellers etc to market their products.



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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.
- 6.1.2. The parking requirements for staff are considered adequately provided for by way of the 5 on site car parking spaces proposed, although it should 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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