REFUSE

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

6a West Street, Emsworth, Hampshire

On behalf of:
Emsborne Developments Limited

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CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

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1.0 Instructions and Introduction

(i) Instructions and Introduction

1.1 Neame Sutton Limited, Chartered Town Planners, is instructed by Emsborne Developments Limited ("the Applicant") to prepare a Planning Support Statement to accompany a full detailed planning application in respect of 6a West Street, Emsworth, Hampshire for the "*Conversion of Existing Offices into 2 no. Flats*".

1.2 The statement is divided into five sections. Section 2.0 sets out a description of the site and surrounding area, Section 3.0 details the site's planning history with Section 4.0 providing a description of the proposed development. Section 5.0 examines the relevant planning policy framework and Section 6.0 explores the relevant planning considerations. The statement is drawn to a conclusion in Section 7.0.

2.0 Description of the Site and Surrounding Area

(i) Surrounding Area

2.1 The site is situated within the town of Emsworth in Hampshire. Emsworth is a small coastal town situated in the south eastern corner of Havant Borough and retains a vibrant District Centre which is well served by both road and rail public transport. The A259 runs through the Town and provides access to both the A3 and A27 further to the north.

2.2 The historic core of Emsworth town lies to the south of the A259 and has direct water frontage and forms the Conservation area and attracts many visitors to the town.

(ii) The Site

2.3 The site lies within the District Centre of Emsworth, the Emsworth Conservation Area and the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.4 The site itself comprises a three storey building, which forms part of a terrace which fronts directly onto West Street. The ground floor accommodates a retail unit occupied by Solent Cleaners with B1 Offices at first and second floor level.

2.5 The offices, now vacant, were previously occupied by a Company who, having been taken over relocated to Basingstoke in June 2008. The site was initially marketed by a card placed within the ground floor retail unit's window for a period of 18 months, but generated no interest. This was then followed by a more active marketing campaign undertaken by Henry Adams Commercial Agents, which commenced in August 2010, and again has generated no interest.

2.6 As a consequence the offices have remained vacant since June 2008, a period of 3 years.

2.7 The property itself is self-contained with an access door at street level leading to a hall way and stairs up to the first floor. The first floor offers 632 sq ft of accommodation and currently comprises one large front room with bay window overlooking West Street, an additional room together with two toilets and kitchens. The second floor accommodation comprises one room of 305 sq ft office space.

2.8 West Street is a cul-de-sac in the southern half of Emsworth. The street is narrow with limited on street parking. Vehicular access to the site is gained via a side street which leads to a small parking area in the south western corner of the site.

2.9 The site is irregular in shape and extends to approximately 0.07ha. The adjoining property at 4 West Street is a public house and 8 West Street is a charity shop.

3.0 Planning History

3.1 The site has been subject to a number of planning applications, most of which relate to the retail use on the ground floor. The applications are detailed in the table below

Reference	Description	Decision
09/74146/000	Conversion of existing offices into 2No. flats.	Withdrawn 08.12.2009
07/72076/002	New fascia to shopfront	Granted 12.09.2007
07/72076/001	Display of externally illuminated fascia sign fronting West Street.	Refused 05.04.2007

3.2 The submission of this planning application follows the submission of planning application reference 09/74146/000 which was withdrawn on the advice of Officers as the application was required to be supported by evidence of marketing for a period in excess of six months.

4.0 Description of the Proposed Development

4.1 The planning application seeks the change of use of the first and second floors from B1 Office to C3 Residential. The proposed development seeks the provision of 2 no. flats with car parking for 2no. cars to the rear of the site.

4.2 The layout will enable the provision of 1 no. flat to the south of the site with a 2 storey maisonette to the north of the site.

4.3 The external appearance of the property will remain unchanged and the retail unit on the ground floor will be retained as part of the proposed development.

5.0 Planning Policy Framework

(i) National

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (February 2005)

5.1 PPS1 identifies the Government's objectives for the creation of sustainable communities and seeks to promote the importance of making the most efficient use of previously developed land within urban areas.

PPS3: Housing (June 2010) (updated June 2011)

5.2 PPS3 sets out the Government's policy in relation to planning for housing as part of its overall Sustainable Communities agenda. The PPS seeks to further the policy objectives of its predecessor in relation to delivering high quality sustainable residential development whilst making the most effective and efficient use of land.

PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment (March 2010)

5.3 PPS5 sets out the Government's objectives in relation to planning and the historic environment. The Government's overall aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. In this respect, it is important to acknowledge the impact of vacant units on the vibrancy of the district centre and conservation area.

PPG13: Transport (January 2011)

5.4 PPG13 sets out the Government's objectives for the integration of transport and development in order to ensure sustainable patterns of transportation, with an emphasis on maximising opportunities for sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

DCLG Consultation: Relaxation of planning rules for change of use from commercial to residential (April to June 2011)

5.5 This consultation sought views on the Government's proposals to amend the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995* (as amended) to introduce permitted development rights to allow changes of use from B1 (business – offices, research and development premises and light industry) to C3 (dwelling houses), without the need to submit planning applications. This advice was re-iterated in a Dear Chief Planning Officer Letter dated 08 April 2011.

5.6 It is clear that the Government intends to encourage economic growth by encouraging developers to bring redundant commercial premises back into use and at the same time help tackle the need for more housing.

DCLG Plan for Growth (June 2011)

5.7 On 15 June 2011 the Government published a presumption in favour of sustainable development as part of its plan for growth, which states that:

"There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system, which should be central to the approach taken to both plan-making and decision-taking. Local planning authorities should plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible".

(ii) The Development Plan

5.8 The current Development Plan comprises the adopted South East Plan, the Havant Borough Core Strategy (March 2011) and the saved policies of the adopted Havant Borough Local Plan (September 2005), which set out the detailed framework for development in the District until 2026.

South East Plan:

5.9 The South East Plan was adopted in May 2009 and at the time of preparing this Statement remains part of the Statutory Development Plan for the purposes of S.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Whilst not set out in detail in this Statement the Applicant has had due regard to the content of the South East Plan in preparation of this planning application.

Havant Borough Core Strategy:

5.10 Those policies of direct relevance to this application are set out below and considered in Section 6.0 below:

Policy	Title
CS17	Concentration and Distribution of Development within the Urban Areas
CS16	High Quality Design
CS1	Health and Wellbeing
CS20	Transport and Access Strategy
DM13	Car and Cycle Parking on Residential Development
CS21	Developer Requirements
CS11	Protecting and Enhancing the Special Environment and Heritage of Havant Borough
CS4	Town, District and Local Centres
CS12	Chichester Harbour AONB
DM3	Protection of Existing Employment and Tourism Sites

(iii) Other policy considerations

Emsworth Village Design Statement

5.11 The Borough Council adopted the Emsworth Village Design Statement as a material planning consideration in November 2008. The document seeks to give guidance for stakeholders by providing detailed information on what is considered important by the local community. The document examines the landscape setting, settlement patterns and the built environment of Emsworth.

Employment Land Review

5.12 The Council instructed DTZ to undertake an Employment Land Review of the Borough, which was published in February 2010.

5.13 The report identifies that there is currently an 18% surplus of vacant B1a office space even after taking account a 10% market churn. In addition, there is an abundance of extant unimplemented planning permissions for new B1 office space within the District.

5.14 The site is located within a wider area identified within the document under reference BD43: Emsworth District Centre, and is identified as having a mixture of town centre uses with an overall average score of 2.8 "Good." It is relevant to note that the document inaccurately indicates that there is no vacant floorspace within this area at present, and does not therefore reflect the vacant unit the subject of the application site.

6.0 Planning Considerations

(i) Principle of Change of Use and Loss of Employment

6.1 The starting point in considering the merits of the application proposal is to explore the principle of the proposed change of use from B1a office to C3 residential.

6.2 The Application site is situated within the defined District Centre of Emsworth on the Core Strategy Proposals Map. Emsworth town is identified as one of five principal towns within Havant Borough and is therefore acknowledged to be the most sustainable location for accommodating new housing.

6.3 West Street comprises a mix of uses, including retail, residential and offices, and are therefore considered to be compatible with the proposed use of the building on the Application site for residential purposes.

6.4 The key policy test in the Core Strategy relating to a change of use from B1a office to C3 residential is set out in Policy DM3: Protection of Existing Employment and Tourism Sites, which states that:

> *"The change of use or development of land or premises currently or last used for B use class employment purposes to non-B use class employment will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that the land or premises are not fit for purpose and financially unviable for B use class purposes. Where it is clearly demonstrated that the site is no longer suitable for B use class employment, other types of economic development should be considered in the first instance. These uses will be expected to provide employment opportunities of similar quality and quantity as those which previously existed. Only if another type of economic development cannot be found which provides similar quality and quantity of employment opportunity, will other uses then be considered.*

For both employment and tourism sites this shall be demonstrated through an active and exhaustive marketing process covering at least 18 months for a major site and 12 months for all other sites. In all cases the marketing process requires as a minimum:

i) Confirmation by the marketing agent on headed company paper that the premises were appropriately and extensively marketed for the required length of time as set out by the council. ii) Dated photographs of marketing board/s of an appropriate quality, size, scale, location and number, during this time, on the premises.

iii) An enquiry log, how it was followed up and why it was unsuccessful.

iv) A copy of all advertisements in the local press and trade journals (should be at least four weeks' worth of advertisements spread across a six month period).

v) Evidence of marketing via the internet.

6.5 In order to address the Council's requirement that an existing employment site must demonstrate that it is not fit for purpose and finically unviable, the Applicant instructed commercial agents Henry Adams to actively market the property for B1a Office purposes and advise on the potential for other employment type uses.

6.6 Henry Adams play an active role in the office market within Emsworth and the wider surrounding areas and therefore have extensive experience of dealing with such properties across the region.

6.7 Following the Applicant's unsuccessful marketing of the property over an 18 month period, and in response to the advice of Planning Officers in relation to the previous withdrawn application, Henry Adams listed the property in August 2010 and undertook an extensive marketing campaign. Details of this marketing campaign are submitted in support of the planning application.

6.8 During this time Henry Adams has received no interest and the property remains on the market at the present time and will continue to be marketed unless and until consent is granted for this application.

6.9 Henry Adams professional view regarding the lack of interest for B1a offices is that the accommodation does not meet the expectations of modern business needs. The offices are outdated and inflexible in the way the accommodation is laid out. In particular, the 5 rooms over two floors do not suit modern open plan working practices favoured by most businesses. Furthermore, there is a lack of free designated car parking generally sought by employers for their staff and visitors.

6.10 In addition, Henry Adams has considered the suitability of the accommodation for other employment type uses, including those falling within Use Classes A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and D1 (Non Residential Institutions) such as medical and health services eg, consulting rooms for dentists, physiotherapists, doctors etc, and concluded that potential occupiers would find the accommodation unsuitable for the following reasons:

- The narrow entrance hall limits the appeal to A2/D1 users that are requiring access for the general public;

- The steps up from pavement level and narrow steep stairs to first floor level restrict the suitability for the general public and complying with Disability Discrimination Act requirements in terms of disabled access. The width of the stairs is not sufficient for a stair lift. Wheel chair access to the upper floors would not be possible; and

- There is very limited opportunity for signage at ground floor level to attract passing customers.

6.11 Whilst the property could be modernised to maximise its appeal, the layout of the accommodation would remain inflexible and it is Henry Adams advice that the level of financial outlay required to upgrade the property will not be met by an appropriate rental/resale value, particularly with modern purpose built flexible accommodation available elsewhere in the Borough.

6.12 It is therefore apparent that the need for offices and other employment uses at first and second floor level in this part of Emsworth is limited. The property is currently vacant and therefore represents both a cost and liability to the Applicant as well as being an unwelcome presence in the street, which comprises a range of retail units at ground floor level with residential use above.

6.13 In light of the marketing campaign and advice of Henry Adams, it is contended that the existing offices at 6a West Street are unfit for purpose and financially unviable and that the Applicant has satisfied the Council's requirements as set out in Policy DM3.

6.14 Furthermore, having regard to both the supply and demand of employment land, the Council's Employment Land Review (2010) demonstrates that there is a surplus of employment land to 2016 and in particular, an 18% surplus of vacant B1a office space. In such circumstances, the study recommends that if monitoring indicates that a surplus remains, and the site in question has been the subject of marketing for the relevant period (12 months in the case of 6a West Street), then a policy of releasing the site for redevelopment in alternative use can be considered subject to other material considerations and planning issues (paragraph 3.21).

6.15 The recent DCLG's publications, particularly the presumption in favour of sustainable development, is also of relevance and gives a clear steer of the Government's preference for development/change of use in sustainable locations rather than no development/change of use at all. In this case the merits of conversion to a residential use should be afforded greater weight than seeking to retain vacant office accommodation that has little prospect of being reoccupied for employment purposes.

(ii) Principle of Residential Use

6.16 The Appeal site is situated within the defined urban area of Emsworth on the adopted Core Strategy Proposals Map and within The Emsworth District Centre. In this respect, Policy CS17 states that development or redevelopment will be permitted within the built-up area boundaries, subject to addressing all other relevant development control policies.

6.17 The site comprises an existing property which will remain unchanged externally. The principle of the change of use is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

6.18 By contrast to the current office use, which has resulted in the building lying vacant since June 2008 and without any real prospect of a new occupier in the near future, the proposed new residential use will bring about positive refurbishment of the building and will ensure that it is maintained in the long term.

6.19 The introduction of residential accommodation on upper floors of premises is supported as outlined in PPS3 which promotes the reuse of vacant properties in urban areas for residential use. It is understood that the Council's Economic Development Officer raised no objection to the Applicant's previous planning application for a change of use from offices to residential.

6.20 In addition, and as a supplementary point the Borough Council's latest assessment of housing supply set out in its December 2010 Annual Monitoring Report indicates that there is a shortfall in the provision of new housing when set against the Strategic Housing requirement in the recently reinstated South East Plan and is reliant on meeting this shortfall through the delivery in the later years of the plan period of the west of Waterlooville MDA and 2 reserve sites. The Council therefore has a need for new housing now to be provided in sustainable locations.

(iii) Emsworth Conservation Area & Chichester Harbour AONB

6.21 The site lies within the Emsworth Conservation Area and Chichester Harbour AONB wherein Policy CS11 states that development proposals protect and where possible enhance the Borough's statutory and non-statutory landscape and heritage designations.

6.22 The application proposals will not result in any external changes to the property and through its refurbishment and conversion to residential will improve its contribution to this part of the Conservation Area. Accordingly, no adverse impact arises from the proposed change of use from B1 office to C3 residential.

(iv) Access and Parking

6.23 The site is located within Emsworth District Centre which is considered to represent a highly sustainable location which is served well in terms of rail and bus provision. The site is located approximately 70m from the nearest bus stop to the north west of the site with the train station lying 500m to the north of the site.

6.24 The application proposal makes provision for 2 no. vehicular and 4 no. cycle parking spaces by utilising the existing parking area to the rear of the site. This provision is considered to be satisfactory given the sites central location within Emsworth District Centre and close proximity to public transport.

7.0 Summary and Conclusion

(i) Summary

7.1 This Application has been prepared on a comprehensive basis following an extensive marketing exercise lasting in excess of twelve months during which time alternative uses for the commercial use of the property have been explored.

7.2 The proposed residential development has arisen following unsuccessful attempts to secure tenants to occupy for a commercial use. Henry Adams Commercial Agents has concluded that the property is not suitable for commercial uses and this is outlined in their Marketing Report which accompanies the planning application submission.

7.3 The proposed development should also be considered in light of the Government's emerging proposals to amend the Use Classes Order to enable the change of use of offices to residential without the need for planning permission.

7.4 There will be no external changes to the building as part of the proposed development and therefore no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the Emsworth Conservation Area or Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

7.5 The property has been vacant for a period of 3 years and has no/little prospect of being reoccupied for employment purposes. Conversion to a residential use should in the Applicant's view be supported in the interests of achieving sustainable communities. Furthermore, the requirements of Policy DM3 have been complied with in that it has been demonstrated that the accommodation is unfit for purpose and finically unviable.

(ii) Conclusion

7.6 For the reasons set out in this Planning Supporting Statement, the Applicant considers that Officer's concerns in respect of the withdrawn application 09/74146/000 have been overcome and respectfully requests that the Council grants full detailed planning permission.
