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Public Services Plaza

Civic Centre Road
Havant
Hampshire
PO9 2AX

28th February 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Planning Application: APP/25/00096 - Change of use from Bank (Class E) to 13-bedroom HMO with part retention of Class E at ground floor. Proposed additional storey and rear extension at the Former Barclays Bank, 81 London Road, Waterlooville, PO7 7ER

This report has been created in support of the application for the creation of two new retail shops on the ground floor, along with a residential proposal for part of the ground floor and the upper floors.

Application Overview:

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the upper floors into a 13-bedroom HMO (House in Multiple Occupation), alongside the reduction of retail space on the ground floor to create two retail units. The applicant strongly supports the goals of **KP2 Waterlooville Town Centre** and is committed to retaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre by maintaining a diverse range of uses. The objective is to improve the town centre's environment and contribute to its evening economy.

Existing Building Use:

The former Barclays Bank previously occupied the entire building, with a total floor area of 419 sqm (302 sqm on the ground floor and 117 sqm on the first floor). The building was divided into various operational areas, including customer-facing space (approx. 97 sqm), meeting rooms, a safe, and staff/ancillary rooms on the first floor.

Proposed Development:

The proposed scheme will create two new retail units on the ground floor. The customer-facing areas will be approximately 50 sqm (Unit 1) and 47 sqm (Unit 2), for a total retail space of 127 sqm. The remaining 31 sqm will provide access to a service area at the rear of the building, with a door leading out to Swiss Road for deliveries and other services.

Market Context and Commercial Viability:

Nationally, the retail landscape has changed significantly in recent years. The closure of large retailers such as Burtons and Dorothy Perkins, as well as many high street banks, is largely due to the shift towards digital banking and rising operational costs of maintaining physical branches. Consequently, large retail units are often left vacant for extended periods.

To ensure the long-term viability and vitality of Waterlooville Town Centre, a new approach is required. The proposed scheme will help maintain retail activity without significant loss of retail space and is fully in line with **KP2**, as it reuses the building more efficiently, while also reducing the burden on new tenants to take on larger, financially unviable units.

Design and Impact on Surroundings:

The proposal will maintain the current shopfront design, ensuring there is no negative impact on the building's appearance or functionality. The overall aesthetic and character of the building will remain consistent with its current style, preserving the integrity of the surrounding area. Any further proposals that create additional mass will be positioned behind the parapet and set back from the street view. Additional levels will extend to the rear of the building.

Encouraging Small Businesses:

The layout and size of the proposed retail units are designed to appeal to local entrepreneurs, with the potential for small business rate relief. The large, vacant space currently available is unlikely to attract a new commercial tenant due to the significant financial commitments it would require. By offering smaller, more manageable units, the proposal supports the ongoing viability of the high street in the current economic climate.

Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure:

The applicant is committed to respecting the biodiversity policy and will incorporate elements such as planting or bird boxes to enhance the green infrastructure in the area.

Conclusion:

In summary, the applicant is keen to work with Havant Borough Council to develop a vibrant, mixed-use property that will benefit Waterlooville Town Centre. The proposal aligns with the objectives of **KP2**, making efficient use of town centre land, while maintaining an active town centre during the evening. The partial reduction of retail space on the ground floor should be viewed as a positive step towards modernizing the high street, with smaller, more manageable retail units that can thrive in today's retail environment.

The change of use for the upper floors to residential space, combined with the retention of active ground-floor retail units, offers a balanced and sustainable approach to reimagining this building in line with current economic and social trends.

If you have any queries regarding the proposals, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 07545 272423 or via email at james@jbarchstudio.com.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Bengree', written in a fluid, cursive style.

James Bengree

B.A. (Hons) MSc ACIAT

Director

JB Architectural Design Studio