

Response to officer's committee report- Aura House- APP/20/00875

Following receipt of the officer's report for committee in February 2021, there were some aspects of the application which required further information and clarity. This report responds directly to these comments. The document will address:

- Impact of noise/ living conditions
- Loss of employment floorspace
- External amenity and;
- Housing need

Noise

The windows on the building will be fully openable and the proposed works do not restrict resident's ability to open windows should they wish. The windows will be triple glazed and the client is providing a ventilation system that will provide fresh air to all flats. Please see attached letter (appendix 1) confirming that all flats will have fresh clean air at all times. This system also has boost switches which can be used in the kitchen or bathroom to extract and supply more air into the property at particular times if needed.

The Council do not object to the level of noise when windows are shut. The proposed glazing and ventilation system ensures that residents would not be subject to a harmful level of noise from the railway. It should be noted that this is a common design practice in these types of locations and the building shares the same distance from the railway line as many of the other residential properties in the area but with a much better system in place to reduce noise and still allow fresh air. The proposed ventilation system provides healthy levels of fresh air 24/7. This means CO₂, smells and humidity will be extracted and tempered and filtered fresh air is provided. Windows would only need to be opened in purge conditions, such as excessive heat, heavy smoke from burnt food, during this short period of time residents would not be subject to harmful living conditions.

We have clarified the location of the vibration monitoring as requested by the Council in December 2020, this is available to view on the noise report on the website. Care has also been taken by having the bedrooms at the front of the building, away from the railway line. The relationship between the bedrooms and the road at the front is typical of many streets across the borough and country.

Loss of employment floor space

We have now provided the requested information that forms the marketing exercise (see appendix 1 of this document). We have official confirmation by the marketing agent that the building was marketed from 2018-2020 with no interest shown. Potential buyers/occupiers and people who viewed the office building provided feedback as to why it was not an attractive option for their business, why they did not proceed and why the client was unsuccessful. These reasons form our enquiry log and can be viewed on the attached letter from A J Knight.

In summary, potential buyers took office space in Arena, Regus and Northarbour instead as these offices offered more and better facilities than Aura House. For example, other offices had a reception, break out areas and meeting rooms which Aura House does not. Some viewers also commented that staff would want to be closer to cafes and retail and that the level of parking was not suitable for their need.

The screenshots provided in the planning statement are also dated, contrary to the planning policy comments. The impact of Covid-19 has had a significant effect on the interest shown and any potential buyers can now even more easily go elsewhere to better office facilities. We have met and exceeded the policy which requires the unit to be marketed for at least 12 months.

In addition to this, Havant have a 65,000m² surplus of employment floorspace, the loss of 241m² is not considered harmful, especially when it is weighed against the housing benefits being provided. It cannot be justifiably retained and there is no evidence that the loss of this small space would be harmful. The site has never been safeguarded or allocated for office space through planning policy either. The restriction of residential development and the retention of an office use in this location is not justified by the Council.

External Amenity

There is not a Local Plan requirement to provide external amenity space for every new development and we are aware of the previous appeal Inspector's comments which noted that it would not be appropriate to have a garden area to the rear, therefore we have not provided one. The SPD does say that 'where appropriate' garden areas should be secured, however it notes that it is not always possible. Any emerging local plan policies can not be given any weight at this stage. It is not uncommon for a flat development in a highly sustainable location in the urban area to not have a garden area. The site

is well served by publicly accessible areas of green and open space including, Bidbury Mead, Havant Park, Scratchface Lane recreation ground and various pocket parks throughout Leigh Park which residents would have access to.

Housing need

The Council do not have a 5 year housing supply and the housing delivery shortage will likely worsen following the Government's commitment to boosting housing supply. The proposals provide a great opportunity for the Council to address the housing shortage in a sustainable location and on a brownfield site, making an efficient use of land. The area is highly sustainable and would enable people to get on the housing ladder, there are no reasons for refusal in relation to character, appearance, residential amenity or highways. This site would make a positive contribution to the housing shortage and will help prevent greenfield sites or more protected land being developed to meet their housing need.

As such sites like Aura House are imperative to deliver the housing required by the Council, especially when there is not a 5 year housing land supply. Smaller sites such as Aura House make a great contribution and have previously accounted for a large proportion of the housing stock.

Addressing other comments

We would like to confirm that we have agreed to pay the relevant mitigation fees and Natural England are satisfied that this is acceptable.

**Appendix 1: Updated Letter from marketing agent AJ Knight Sales & Lettings 9th
March 2021**

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9th March 2021

RE – Aura House Commercial Units

Dear Ed,

Further to our conversation, I am writing in relation to the units above, and in addition to my previous letter dated November 2019.

AJ knight have marketed these units since the self-contained building was completed back in 2015. Initially we were very successful and able to attract occupiers who found the building suited them. As units became available, we advertised them and then occupied them. As a business we market across a number of platforms which include Rightmove, Zoopla, Social Media and more specific property space boards.

In June 2018 with other empty space we began to market space, which included the new additional office space from plan. Our expectation was the new additional self-contained office would be more desirable. Unfortunately, it became clear that this was not the case.

Our usual process is to take an initial enquiry, confirm and arrange a viewing (if required) and then complete the viewing. We would normally then contact a prospect following the viewing by both telephone and by email to gain feedback and if they wished to make an offer then put this forward to our client.

As a business we do not keep a detailed report of previous viewings, however, having reviewed internal notes and from feedback we received I can confirm the following.

2018

September – No feedback took space elsewhere.

November – Took space in Arena as has serviced space/meeting facilities.

2019

February – Wanted to be closer to town centre, when knew the site in Bedhampton

March – Took space in Regus, Northarbour as like the additional coffee shop/reception service.

March – Not interested when realised would lose additional parking to new build on site.

May – Took space in Arena to be closer to retail units/town centre.

July – Took space with additional parking.

July – Wanted communal space for meetings

November - Located to Basepoint – needed bigger space

November – No feedback, took elsewhere

2020

February – Took space in Basepoint as more parking, meeting room and bigger

February – Took alternative shared space



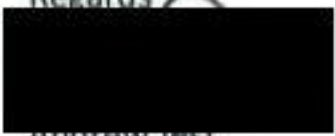
Since the pandemic in March 2020 we have had only one loose enquiry which did not materialise. I would confirm from my previous letter that I feel the space at Aura House, whilst it was once easy and quick to occupy is no longer. Since Arena took Langstone Gate and refurbished their smaller space the number of enquiries has dramatically reduced, and I do not see any way we can improve the offering at Aura House.

My opinion remains the same that there is better space at Basepoint in Havant and Waterlooville and also the Regus site in Cosham is more suited to companies that would have taken space in Aura House around 5 years ago. The businesses that I have spoken to have referred to cafes/shops on site at other locations or locality to the town centre/retail parks.

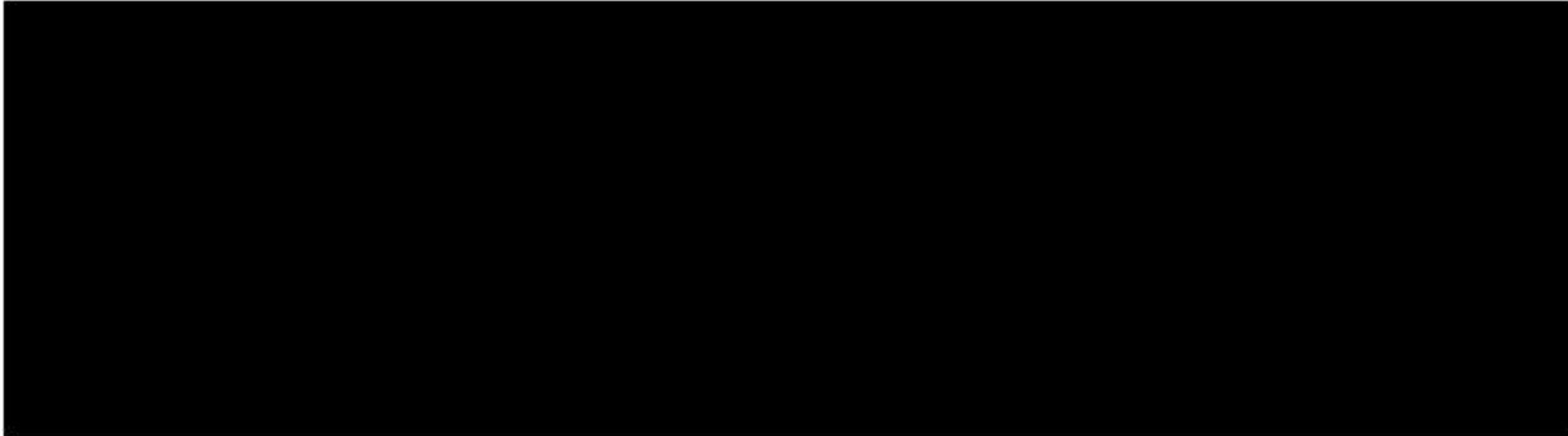
The effects of Covid 19 have reduced enquiries and I do not see that there will be any improvement.

If I can assist further, then please do get in touch

Regards


Andrew Jest
Director
AJ Knight Lettings & Sales

Appendix 2: Confirmation from ventilation specialist that the proposals are acceptable



Hi Gary,

The MVHR system will provide balanced ventilation suitable for all occupants to receive healthy levels of airflow without having to open the windows (ie, 30m³hr per typical occupant, constantly over 24 hours). This means CO₂, smells and humidity will be extracted and tempered, filtered fresh air is provided.

This means that windows would only need to be opened in purge conditions, such as excessive heat, heavy smoke from burnt food or to clear paint fumes after redecoration.

Best wishes,
Patrick

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Heatspaceandlight.com

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