



Reference: 16418.L01

19 April 2017

Planning Services
Havant Borough Council
Public Service Plaza
Civic Centre Road
Havant
PO9 2AX

Submitted Via Planning Portal Reference PP-05972947

Dear Sir or Madam

Specsavers, 310 London Road, Waterlooville, PO7 7DU
Proposed Alterations to Existing Building

Please find enclosed our application on behalf of Retail Plus Property Partnership. The application seeks full planning permission for an extension and alterations to the existing premises at 310 London Road, Waterlooville. A schedule of plans and supporting information is attached.

While Specsavers currently occupy the premises, the building no longer meets their operational needs and is too small. Accordingly, the application seeks to provide additional space that will enable Specsavers to continue their occupation.

The following letter sets out the background to the proposals and provides a brief assessment of the development having regard to relevant planning policies.

Site Location and Description

The application concerns the premises at 310 London Road, Waterlooville. The Application Site falls within the defined boundary of Waterlooville Town Centre and is within the Primary Frontage. It forms part of a terrace of retail units that front the pedestrianised area within the heart of the town centre.

Specsavers have occupied the premises as an optician for a number of years. It is open from approximately 0900 hours to 1730 hours during the week; 0830 to 1730 Saturdays, and 0900 to 1700 Sundays.

The premises are primarily two storeys in height and constructed in brick, with a flat roof. The building has a frontage on London Road of just 5.5m, but extends back approximately 26m at ground floor level. Accordingly, the ground floor currently has a gross floorspace of 143sqm. The ground floor currently provides a large retail sales and display area at the front of the premises, together with a reception. There are three examination rooms positioned towards the rear of the building, with toilet facilities and ancillary storage.

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At first floor level, the building depth extends just 5m from its frontage and has a gross floorspace of 27.5sqm. This first floor currently provides a small office and staff accommodation.

While the principal access to the premises is off London Road, servicing is facilitated off Dukes Walk Service Road, which also serves the neighbouring retail premises. The area at the rear of the application site currently comprises hardstanding, used informally for staff parking.

Specsavers currently employs some 19 people at the premises, and it is intended that this would increase to 21 immediately following the extension. This would further rise to 30 within the next two to three years.

Planning History

There have been no proposals for extensions or alterations to the premises: previous applications have related only to advertisements.

The Proposed Development

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a single storey extension to the rear of the ground floor of the premises, together with a rear extension at first floor level.

As noted above, Specsavers currently occupy the premises but it no longer meets the firm's operational needs. The premises are too small and are unable to accommodate the required number of examination rooms to meet the demand. In addition, there is no on-site laboratory and customer orders take longer to process. Accordingly, the application is submitted by the landlord on their behalf and seeks to provide additional space that will enable Specsavers to continue their occupation. Without the additional space proposed, the firm may well choose to vacate the premises.

At ground floor level, the existing building would be extended to the rear by 9.9m over the existing area of hardstanding. The extension will provide two additional examination rooms, together with improved storage facilities and customer toilets. The extension would have a gross floorspace of 51sqm. This would give a total gross floorspace at ground floor level of 194sqm. The proposed extension would be constructed in brick to match the existing building, with a flat roof.

The existing building would be extended by 8.9m at first floor level, providing an additional 49sqm gross floorspace. This would be used for improved staff accommodation, as well as the introduction of a laboratory. The delivery of a laboratory within the premises will enable Specsavers to provide a considerably improved service to their customers and an enhanced range of facilities.

Planning Policy Guidance

Relevant planning policy is provided within the National Planning Policy Framework. A presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the Framework: proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay; and where the development plan is silent or out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.¹

The Framework advises that Local Planning Authorities should recognise that town centres at the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their vitality and viability.² Policies should be positive and promote competitive centres. The Framework advises that the need for retail and other town centre uses should be met in full and not limited by site availability.³

Turning to consider local planning policy, the development plan comprises the following documents:

- Adopted 'Havant Borough Local Plan: Core Strategy' 2011; and
- Adopted 'Havant Borough Local Plan: Allocations Plan' 2014.

The adopted Core Strategy predates the publication of the Framework.

Amongst other things, the adopted Core Strategy identifies the requirements for new retail floorspace within the defined town centres. It also confirms that planning permission will be granted for appropriate town centre development proposals that promote and enhance the centres.⁴ Supporting text states that:⁵

" ... The town, district and local centres of the borough lie at the heart of its local communities. The development of accessible, attractive and vibrant centres is central to the achievement of sustainable development in the borough ... "

The Core Strategy encourages the regeneration of town centres, including Waterlooville where the particular focus will be placed on the public realm within London Road.⁶

The Allocations Plan first confirms that the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development will be applied.⁷ It then goes on to provide more detailed advice in relation to town centres. It states that permission will be granted for development that (amongst other things):⁸

- Provide main town centre uses in the town ... centres ... and so contribute to their vitality and viability;
- Promote and enhance the primary shopping areas of the town and district centres ...; and
- Generate pedestrian activity within the primary shopping area ...

¹ National Planning Policy Framework §14

² National Planning Policy Framework §23

³ National Planning Policy Framework §23

⁴ Adopted 'Havant Borough Council Local Plan: Core Strategy' 2011 Policy CS4

⁵ Adopted 'Havant Borough Council Local Plan: Core Strategy' 2011 §3.40

⁶ Adopted 'Havant Borough Council Local Plan: Core Strategy' 2011 Policy CS6

⁷ Adopted 'Havant Borough Council Local Plan: Allocations Plan' 2014 Policy AL1

⁸ Adopted 'Havant Borough Council Local Plan: Allocations Plan' 2014 Policy AL3

Supporting text goes on to confirm that town centres lie at the heart of local communities and it is important that their vitality and viability is protected. Moreover:⁹

" ... Providing active, publically accessible uses at ground floor level is fundamental to developing a prosperous and healthy identity for the primary shopping area. Active ground floor frontages increase levels of natural surveillance and deter anti-social behaviour ... "

Accordingly, both national and local planning policy guidance seek to support the vitality and viability of town centres.

Planning Assessment

We now provide our assessment of the proposal taking account of the background identified above.

Use: The proposed extension will not alter the use or occupation of the premises. Indeed, the additional space is intended specifically to allow their continued occupation by Specsavers. As discussed above, the current building no longer meets their needs and the extension would provide for two additional examination rooms, an on-site laboratory, additional storage and staff accommodation. In the absence of these additional facilities, Specsavers would be required to find alternative premises and the application site would potentially be left vacant.

The proposed extension will therefore help ensure the continue vitality and viability of Waterlooville town centre. National and local planning policy guidance clearly states that this is extremely importance, recognising that town centres lie at the heart of local communities. Specsavers provide an important service and facility for local residents and its retention within Waterlooville is of significance. Furthermore, the Council's Core Strategy seeks to encourage the regeneration and improvements to the public realm along London Road: the retention and enhancement of existing retailers is clearly critical to this objective, avoiding vacant frontages. The improvement of Specsaver's premises will enhance their customer attraction and increase the activity and footfall within the Primary Shopping Frontage.

Taking account of the above, the principle of the proposed development and the continued use is entirely consistent with national and local planning policy. It fully accords with the Council's development plan policies.

Amount and Scale: The existing premises have a total gross floorspace of 170sqm. The proposed development would provide an additional 100sqm of gross floorspace. The ground floor extension would have a gross floorspace of 51sqm (44sqm gross internal) while the first floor extension will deliver approximately 49sqm gross floorspace (44.5sqm gross internal).

It is considered that the amount development is entirely appropriate, and that its scale will be proportionate to the existing building and the character of the surrounding area.

⁹ Adopted 'Havant Borough Council Local Plan: Allocations Plan' 2014 §2.15

Appearance: The proposed development affects only the rear elevation. It will not alter the appearance of the principal elevation of the premises, fronting London Road.

The design and appearance of the proposed rear extensions follows that of the existing host building (which is consistent with those that surround it). It would be constructed in brick to match the existing, and would have a flat roof that follows the form of the existing.

Accordingly, the appearance of the proposed development is entirely acceptable and would not result in significant or demonstrable adverse impacts.

Amenity: The proposal will not result in any detrimental impact on amenity. The use and occupation of the application site will remain unaltered, and this is entirely consistent with its location within a defined town centre. The opening hours of the operation will remain unaltered.

The surrounding uses are entirely commercial and there are no residential premises in close proximity to the application site.

The design and layout of the proposed extension will not affect the outlook from any existing property. The premises immediately to the south do not have any windows on their northern elevation that would overlook the proposed extension. Similarly, properties to the north do not have any significant windows along their rear elevations. Although there are some openings on to the service road, these are typically fire escapes, or small windows serving store rooms or staff toilets etc at the rear of the premises.

Access and Parking: The proposed rear extension will result in the loss of some hardstanding at the back of the existing unit. This is currently used for staff parking on an informal basis. The parking arrangement comprises tandem spaces, accessed off the service road.

While some space would be retained at the rear of the premises, it is likely that the existing informal arrangement would end. Accordingly, those staff that drive to work would be required to use alternative means of travel, or park elsewhere within the town centre. Given the accessibility of the town centre location and the availability of parking elsewhere (within walking distance), the loss of any informal parking would not result in any highway safety or capacity concern. As such, the development is entirely acceptable in this respect.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the application is submitted on behalf of Retail Plus Property Partnership. It seeks full planning permission for an extension and alterations to the existing premises at 310 London Road, Waterloo. The proposed development comprises a ground floor rear extension of 51sqm, and a first floor rear extension of 9sqm.

Retail Plus Property Partnership are the landlord of the premises, and has submitted the application in order to meet the needs of their tenant, Specsavers. The existing building is too small for their needs, and the proposed extension would allow them to enhance the service that they are able to provide their customers. It will provide two additional examination rooms, together with an on-site laboratory to fulfil customer orders, and additional staff accommodation, storage and office space. In the event that the extension does not proceed, it is likely that Specsavers would leave the premises, and they would become vacant.

Our assessment of the proposals demonstrates that the development complies with relevant national and local planning policy, and we would highlight the following points:

The application site is within the defined town centre of Waterloooville

- The extension will improve facilities within the town centre, enhancing its vitality and viability;
- The development will ensure the retention of an existing retailer within the Primary Shopping Frontage;
- The scale of the proposed development is appropriate and proportionate;
- The design and appearance of the proposed works will match that of the existing building;
- The development will not alter the fundamental use, and will not cause harm to amenity.

On this basis, it is considered that planning permission should be granted for the proposed works.

I trust the enclosed documentation is acceptable, but please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours faithfully



Chris Green
Director

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Encl Refer to attached schedule

cc Mr A Wagstaff Addington Capital

310 London Road, Waterloooville

Proposed Extension and Alterations to Existing Building

Schedule of Supporting Information

- Completed Application Forms and Certificate of Ownership
- TPS 'Covering Letter'
- Drawing RD.3794.01 'Existing Plans'
- Drawing RD.3794.02 'Proposed Plans'
- Drawing RD.3794.04 'Site Location Plan'
- Drawing RD.3794.05 'Proposed Block Plan'
- Drawing RD.3794.06 'Existing Block Plan'