

SITE ADJACENT TO McDONALDS,
OLDLANDS WAY, BOGNOR REGIS

1. The proposals seek a change of use from Class B8 (warehouse and distribution) to Class A1 retail. A pre application enquiry was made in September 2013 regarding the proposed change of use (PAA/96/13). A response was issued on 14th October 2013 and stated that a Loss of Employment Use Statement should be submitted in support of the application.
2. The site has been owned by the applicant since July 2009 and has been previously occupied by F & G Transport (Bognor) Limited Storage & Distribution. They vacated the premises in May 2013 and employed 8 people. Since then the applicant has been marketing the premises but have had no interest from warehouse/storage users. Indeed there are vacant industrial units elsewhere within the Southern Cross Industrial Estate. There are three warehouse units owned by Hermes to the south of the application site which are vacant and have been for some time.
3. Indeed the Council's Employment Report prepared by Roger Tym & Partners states with regards distribution that: -

“Arun is not regarded as a major distribution location and its various component sub-sectors (warehousing, storage and wholesaling) are all under-represented in the District. Key locational factors for distribution and logistics activities are the availability of warehousing, storage and distribution sites with access to the strategic road network, as well as an appropriately skilled workforce. However, the District does have a particular niche in warehousing associated with the area's horticultural industries. Despite its reasonable road links to other South Coast settlements via the A27, Arun has lacked large available sites or speculative warehousing premises, and has a number of nearby competitors (e.g. Havant) which are arguably better placed relative to the regional road networks. These factors are likely to have been responsible for the below average growth in employment (if not actual floorspace) in this sector in recent years. Furthermore, the Experian forecasts are predicting a decline

of around 320 jobs in this sector over the plan period. Overall, continued low growth appears to be likely.”

4. Furthermore, the report recognises that there is no need to identify/retain any sites for strategic distribution given the factors above and that looking ahead there is a predicated oversupply of industrial land in quantitative terms relative to future needs. In such circumstances there is a need to consider releasing some of this land for other uses. Indeed such an approach is inconsistent with the advice in paragraph 22 of the NPPF which states: -

“Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

5. Indeed this was the approach taken by the Planning Authority in granting planning permission for the McDonalds recommendation to the north of the application site (Application No. BE/17/12). Indeed the planning officer’s Committee Report stated: -

“The change of use from a vacant building for a restaurant and drive through providing 65 full and part time jobs is considered to be of benefit to the local economy. The development is considered to be sustainable development in accordance with the principles of the NPPF and it is therefore recommended that the application is approved...”

6. In view of the above the loss of employment land is not a reason to withhold planning permission in this case.