

Conversion & Change of Use
of Single Storey Former
Printer's Workshop to Form
2-Bed Dwelling with Cycle
Parking & Refuse Storage
Facilities

At

47 Aldwick Road, Bognor
Regis, West Sussex, PO21
2NJ

Economic Development Statement



Figure 1 Application site Viewed from Rear of 47 Aldwick Road

On behalf of
Mr John Thorp

PTP
Pickup Town Planning

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30th October 2024

Final Issue

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The application site comprises a three-storey end of terrace property located on the south side of Aldwick Road in Bognor Regis. The existing ground floor accommodation comprises two self-contained units; a Use Class E town centre commercial unit, at the front, along with a vacant, former printers' workshop, to the rear. Each of the two upper floors are occupied by a single residential flat.

1.2 Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the rear single storey part of 47 Aldwick Road to form a two-bedroom dwelling. The dwelling would be served by a 5.9m to 12.7m deep amenity space, with pedestrian and cycle access around the side of the existing building.

1.3 This Economic Development Statement is submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) at the request of the planning application Validation Team. The Validation Officer stated in a letter dated 1st October 2024 *"All planning applications which result in the loss of industrial premises and employment floor space must be accompanied by an Economic Development Statement as set out in the Validation Requirements List."* Having viewed the Local Plan it appears that the Validation Officer is referring to Local Plan policy EMP DM1.

1.4 The relevant part of this policy states the following:

Policy EMP DM1

Employment Land: Development Management

1. Enhancement of employment premises and sites

The Council will seek to protect and enhance existing employment sites and premises in order to maintain a supply of good quality commercial sites and premises to meet the needs of businesses and the local economy.

The Council will promote and support positive measures to upgrade existing employment areas through:

- a. Supporting appropriate proposals for development/re-development of employment floorspace, upgrading or modernisation of existing premises and/or proposals which make more efficient use of under-used employment sites and premises; and
- b. Working with landowners and developers to achieve better management of employment areas, including measures which increase sustainability and reduce crime.

2. Protection of existing employment premises and sites

Existing employment sites and premises will be protected where there remains a reasonable prospect of employment use. Excepting Permitted Development Rights or Local/Neighbourhood Development Orders, change of use from Business Class (B1-B8) or similar sui generis⁽²³⁾ uses will not be permitted unless:

- a. It is demonstrated that the site is no longer required and is unlikely to be re-used or re-developed for industrial/commercial purposes. This should include clear demonstration of marketing, viability appraisal and the suitability of the site to accommodate the proposed use - using a methodology to be agreed by the District Council at pre-application advice stage; or
- b. The existing location poses insurmountable environmental harm or amenity which cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

The Council will require evidence that the site has not been made deliberately unsuitable, that marketing has been actively conducted for a reasonable period of time and that alternative employment uses have been fully explored.

3. Relocation and expansion of existing businesses

The Council will positively encourage the relocation of existing firms wishing to expand within Arun District where this will improve their economic and environmental sustainability, improve the local environment for local residents and/or enhance the sustainable development potential of adjoining sites. The Council will support the regeneration and renewal of these sites and their surroundings for housing and mixed-use development, if this assists the viability of the business relocation in Arun District.

4. Office development

The Council will seek to direct office development to the town centres. Enterprise Bognor Regis will also be considered as a suitable location for office development in accordance with Policy EMP DM2.

5. Range of unit sizes

Where appropriate the Council will require the provision of a range of unit sizes including small and medium sized business units and live-work units in new economic development and mixed-use sites to ensure the needs of businesses are met.

1.5 The letter from the Council's Validation Team goes on to state:

"Where the information requested above relates to a local validation requirement, you may request that the requirement is waived. The information requested should be reasonable having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and about a matter which it is reasonable to think would be a material consideration in determining the application..."

1.6 The applicant requests that the LPA notes the following:

- (i) The redevelopment of the rear part of the site for residential purposes was the subject of a pre-application enquiry (LPA Ref: PAA/100/19). The response received from the LPA did not state that the proposal should be the subject of assessment under this policy. The pre-application response of the LPA was largely positive in relation to the provision of a residential scheme to the rear of the frontage premises, however, concluded that the two dwellings which were of a 2-storey, single aspect design would not be appropriate.
- (ii) The previous occupiers of the frontage unit (Farndell's Estate Agents) did not require such a large premises to operate their business. As such, internal works were undertaken resulting in the subdivision of the ground floor of the premises. The front part of the premises formed a self-contained estate agents office; the rear part of the application site was self-contained and left unoccupied.

Although it is understood that efforts were made to market the self-contained, rear ground floor unit at this time (i.e. 2007/2008) there was only a little interest initially, which then fell away. The rear ground floor unit has remained empty, unused and unoccupied ever since.

It is considered, therefore, that the self-contained rear ground floor unit, which has remained empty, unused and unoccupied for the past 16 to 17 years, now, in all likelihood, has a 'nil' use. In effect this means that the rear part of the ground floor premises no longer has a lawful industrial or employment use. This being the case it is considered that the proposed development would not result in the loss of industrial premises and employment floor space, and therefore, does not need to be assessed in relation to policy EMP DM1.

2.0 Application Site Description

2.1 The application site comprises a three-storey end of terrace property located on the south side of Aldwick Road in Bognor Regis. The existing ground floor accommodation comprises two self-contained units; a Use Class E town centre commercial unit, at the front, along with a vacant, former printers' workshop, to the rear. Each of the two upper floors are occupied by a single residential flat. The front ground floor unit was occupied, up until recently, by an estate agents business, whereas the unit to the rear of the site has been vacant and unused for approximately 16/17 years.

2.2 The application site is roughly rectangular in shape, however, tapers gradually from front to back having a maximum width and length of 11.5m and 31.0m respectively. The site is located within an area known as West End with shops, cafes and offices which on both sides of Aldwick Road between its junction with Park Road, to the east, and Nyewood Lane, to the west. The site is within designated Built-Up Boundary for Bognor Regis and is within an area defined as Flood Zone 1 by the Environment Agency. The application building is identified within the Councils Buildings & Structures of Character, Adopted September 2005, Supplementary Planning Document as a locally listed building.



Figure 2 Application Site and Surrounding Area

2.3 The application site is flat with access to the rear being via a gated side alley to the east of the building. As has been stated, the front of the ground floor of the premises currently accommodates a Use Class E town centre unit that was last occupied by an estate agents business. This unit has a floor area of some 112.0sq.m. This unit accommodates a shop floor, kitchen, offices and a staffroom, wc, together with a store area and occupies the 'footprint' of the three-storey building as well as a small part of the series of ground floor extensions to the rear.

2.4 To the rear of the frontage unit is a self-contained unit that was last used as a printers' workshop. This has a floor area of some 51.5 sq.m. and comprises the former workshop, store and wc. Immediately on entering the rear part of the site through the gate is an external, cast-iron circular staircase. This serves as a means of escape for the existing first and second floor flats. The gated side alley also allows access to the rear yard. The yard has a depth of between 5.9m and 12.7m and a width of between 7.0m and 8.0m. This area is mainly laid with a concrete surface which has broken up in places.

2.5 Part of the prevailing pattern and character of development within the existing row of

development on the south side of Aldwick Road is the provision of dwellings to the rear of the frontage premises.

2.6 Immediately to the south and west of the application site is Hilary House, which comprises 12 flats within two blocks. These are accessed from both Park Road, to the east and Stocker Road to the south. Immediately west of the rear yard of the application site is the rear yard of 45 Aldwick Road (please refer to Figs. 15 and 16). The rear yard is enclosed by a 2.0m high close boarded fence to its west and south boundaries together with a 2.0m high brick wall along its eastern boundary.

3.0 Chronology of Sites Use

3.1 The ground floor premises of 47 Aldwick Road, Bognor Regis have been occupied for a range of town centre uses since the buildings construction during the early 20th Century. What is known of the previous occupancy is set out below.

Pharmacy/Chemist

3.2 Up until 1963 the ground floor of the premises was used as a pharmacy/chemist. At this time the rear extension was used for washing bottles/developing photographic film/processing prescriptions/administration etc – with the front area being used for the sale of pharmaceutical goods and for the dispensing medicine etc.

Use of the Premises between 1963 & 2007

3.3 It is understood that 47 Aldwick Road was, after 1963, occupied by several shopping and retail businesses. In 1985 the unit was leased to Prontaprint – a franchised print shop and stationers. The shopfront area was used for the display of printers' equipment, stationery, printing paper etc with the rear extension being used to accommodate printing equipment, photo copiers together with associated rolls of printing paper etc.

Farndells Estates Agent

3.4 Following the death of the Prontaprint leaseholder in 2007 the premises was placed on the market. Farndell's Estates Agent took occupancy of the front element of the ground floor premises in 2007. They considered the size of the whole unit to be excessive and it was at this time that the rear single storey extension was physically separated and self-contained from the shopfront area. Farndell's only leased the front self-contained part of the ground floor of the premises the rear self-contained unit being left unoccupied, empty and unused. Farndell's occupied the frontage unit until January 2024 and have since relocated to premises at 79 Aldwick Road. It is understood that new tenants are in the process of taking occupancy of the front self-contained unit.

3.5 Since the rear extension was self-contained from the estate agents business it has remained empty and unoccupied – and not leased out to any business. No form of commercial, business or industrial activity has taken place in the rear ground floor self-contained unit since 2007. As such, this part of the ground floor of 47 Aldwick Road is considered to now have a 'nil' use having lost any previous lawful planning use.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 As has been stated this Economic Development Statement is submitted to the LPA at the request of the planning application Validation Team. As such, the proposed development has been reviewed in relation to Local Plan policy EMP DM1 – Employment Land – Development Management. Part 1 of this policy, 'Employment land and sites' states *"The Council will seek to protect and enhance existing employment land and sites..."* Part 2 of the policy concerns 'Protection of existing

employment land and sites'. This policy states *"Existing employment land and sites will be protected where there remains a reasonable prospect of employment use..."*

4.2 As has been outlined at paragraph 1.6 of this statement the applicant is of the view that policy EMP DM1 is not applicable to this proposal. It will be seen from the LPAs response to pre-application enquiry PAA/100/19/ (attached as Appendix I to the Planning, Heritage, Design & Access Statement) that officers did not consider the residential development proposed at that time needed to be assessed in relation to policy EMP DM1.

4.3 Additionally, it is considered that the existing rear self-contained ground floor unit has a 'nil' use and does not comprise either existing 'employment land' or an existing 'employment site'. The ground floor of 47 Aldwick Road was subdivided into two self-contained units between 2007 and 2008. The frontage unit was then occupied and used as an estate agents up until January 2024. The rear ground floor unit has remained empty, unused, untenanted and unoccupied ever since 2007/2008. The applicant advises that following the vacation of the site by Prontaprint the rear self-contained unit was offered for rent on the open market. It is understood that, at that time, there were two expressions of interest from a lawnmower repair business and a wool and knitting business. Interest fell away with the future tenants commenting that the unit: (i) had no frontage onto Aldwick Road; (ii) suffered from poor servicing facilities, with inadequate on-street parking for service vehicle deliveries/collections on Aldwick Road, and; (iii) a constrained access to the premises along the east side of the building and. As such, the rear ground floor unit has remained empty, unused, untenanted and unoccupied ever since 2007/2008.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing vacant rear self-contained unit at 47 Aldwick Road to form a two-bedroom dwelling. The dwelling would be served by a 5.9m to 12.7m deep amenity space, with pedestrian and cycle access around the side of the existing building.

5.2 The applicant has carefully considered the LPAs response to pre-application enquiry PAA/100/19/. The LPAs advice did not state that it would be necessary to assess the future use of the site for residential purposes in relation to the Council's employment policies. Given that the rear self-contained unit was created approximately 16 to 17 years ago, and has remained empty, unused, untenanted and unoccupied ever since, it is considered not to have any existing lawful industrial or employment use. Consequently, an assessment of this proposal in relation to Local Plan policy EMP DM1 is not considered necessary.

5.3 It is concluded that, in terms of current planning policy, the proposed development would be an example of 'sustainable development' and would, as such, be compliant with both the NPPF and the policies of the Arun Local Plan.

5.4 The applicant respectfully requests that Officers and Councillors look favourably on this proposed development and grant planning permission.