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Site Address:	Aura House, New Road, Havant, PO9 1DE		
Proposal:	Proposed 2 storey undercroft office extension.		
Application No:	APP/17/00347	Expiry Date:	13/06/2017
Applicant:	Mr Robinson		
Agent:	Mr Knight	Case Officer:	David Eaves
	Knight Architectural Design		
Ward:	Bedhampton		

Reason for Committee Consideration: HPS referral

HPS Recommendation: **REFUSE PERMISSION**

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### **Executive Summary**

The proposed development is for an office extension on an existing restricted site. An application of very similar size and layout was refused by the Development Management Committee in December 2016 on grounds that the proposal would by reason of its siting, design, size, materials, height, mass and bulk have a significant harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area and existing building. Furthermore the extension would have represented an overdevelopment of the site. Whilst this revised application puts forward a more satisfactory palette of materials and roof form, and more information is provided with regards to the potential business and employment opportunities arising from the development, these benefits are considered to be relatively modest and are not considered to outweigh the proposal's overall environmental harm which is principally a result of the prominence of the development and the tapered configuration of the site; matters which are not able to be overcome. It is therefore recommended that the application be refused planning permission.

### **1 Site Description**

- 1.1 The application site is located to the south of New Road and to the north of the Portsmouth to Waterloo/Brighton railway line. Bedhampton Station and level crossing lies to the south east. To the east of the site are terraced residential dwellings.
- 1.2 The site itself comprises a roughly triangular area of land which contains two storey office accommodation. The main building when viewed from New Road has a symmetrical form with a central gable feature and projecting wings to either side. The building includes brick to the ground floor and tile hanging to the first floor with a tiled roof. This is the most prominent building on the site. To the north east is an older converted building with a pitched gable roof fronting New Road which has recently been linked to the main building by a two storey addition. The linked buildings are all in office use.

### **2 Planning History**

APP/16/00928 - Proposed two storey undercroft office extension., REFUSED, 09/12/2016

This application was determined at the Councils Development Management Committee on the 8th December 2016 and subsequently refused planning permission on the 9th December 2016 for the following reason:

*The proposed Office Extension would by reason of its prominent siting, design, size, materials, height, mass and bulk have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area, detract from the appearance of the existing main building and represent an overdevelopment of this shallow and constricted site. The proposal would therefore conflict with policy CS16 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011, the Havant Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.*

APP/15/00865 - Proposed new infill extension in addition to approved planning permission APP/14/01004 for two storey office block., PERMITTED,19/10/2015

APP/15/00723 - Variation of Condition 10 of Planning Permission APP/14/01004 relating to approved plans., PERMITTED,21/08/2015

APP/14/01004 - Proposed new two storey office block and car parking. PERMITTED 10.12.14

### **3 Proposal**

- 3.1 The proposal currently under consideration is for the erection of an extension to the south-western corner of the existing main building. The extension would be two storeys in height although at ground floor level it would be used for open car parking such that the first floor would be supported on piers. The roof form incorporates pitched roofs of traditional forms and a small area of flat roof to the back of the building. The front and rear elevations include larger and smaller gables with a hipped roof to the south west elevation. In terms of materials, the proposal is to use tile hanging and brick detailing bands and tiles to the roof all to match elements of the existing buildings.
- 3.2 The extension would project forward of the existing building by approximately 5m towards New Road. The extension would provide an additional 43.6sqm of office floorspace. It would be linked to the existing office internally.

### **4 Policy Considerations**

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) March 2011

CS16	(High Quality Design)
CS17	(Concentration and Distribution of Development within the Urban Areas)
CS2	(Employment)
DM14	(Car and Cycle Parking on Development (excluding residential))

Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations) July 2014

AL1	(Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
DM18	(Protecting New Development from Pollution)

Havant Borough Design Guide SPD December 2011

Havant Borough Parking SPD July 2016

Listed Building Grade: Not applicable.  
Conservation Area: Not applicable.

## **5 Statutory and Non Statutory Consultations**

### **Environment Agency**

The Environment Agency has no comments to make.

### **Environmental Health**

No comments received.

### **Development Engineer (Highways)**

The Highway Authority has no adverse comment to this application providing the turning areas are constructed and laid out as shown on the submitted plan in order to ensure that vehicles can turn on site and enter the highway in a forward gear.

### **Network Rail**

No comments received.

Comments in relation to previous (similar) application below:

The developer/applicant must ensure that their proposal, both during construction and after completion of works on site, does not:

- encroach onto Network Rail land
- affect the safety, operation or integrity of the company's railway and its infrastructure
- undermine its support zone
- damage the company's infrastructure
- place additional load on cuttings
- adversely affect any railway land or structure
- over-sail or encroach upon the air-space of any Network Rail land
- cause to obstruct or interfere with any works or proposed works or Network Rail development both now and in the future

The developer should comply with comments and requirements for the safe operation of the railway and the protection of Network Rail's adjoining land (detailed comments provided in relation to:

- Future maintenance
- Drainage
- Plant & Materials
- Scaffolding
- Piling
- Fencing
- Lighting
- Landscaping

### **Southern Electric**

No comments received.

### **Economic Development**

The proposed development has the potential to support 3 new jobs on the site at the established ratio of sq metres per person. With this in mind I can support the development.

## **6 Community Involvement**

This application was publicised in accordance with the Council's Code of Practice for Publicity of Planning Applications approved at minute 207/6/92 (as amended), as a result of which the following publicity was undertaken:

Number of neighbour notification letters sent: 8

Number of site notices: 1

Statutory advertisement: Not applicable.

Number of representations received: 0

## **7 Planning Considerations**

7.1 Having regard to the relevant policies of the development plan it is considered that the main issues arising from this application are:

- (i) Principle of development
- (ii) Impact upon the character and appearance of the area and the existing building
- (iii) Impact on employment and business
- (iv) Impact upon residential amenity
- (v) Car parking/highway matters
- (vi) Environmental issues

(i) Principle of development

7.2 The application site is situated within an urban area where further development is considered acceptable subject to the usual development management criteria. The Havant Borough Local Plan seeks to both support economic development and to protect the character and appearance of the Borough, and in doing so secure the delivery of sustainable forms of development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

(ii) Impact upon the character and appearance of the area

7.3 The site is located in a prominent position to the south of New Road in Bedhampton and to the east of the Bedhampton Level Crossing in West Street. There are clear views of the site therefore from the south-west, west, north and north-east with the bend to New Road making the site particularly prominent to pedestrians and from vehicles approaching from the south-west. The site is also viewed from the railway line which runs to the south of the site.

7.4 The site is triangular in shape and has a limited depth. In recent years as can be seen from the planning history it has been developed for commercial office use (residential uses being considered inappropriate in particular because of concerns over impacts from the adjacent railway). The commercial use of the site has been supported by the Council and this has included the conversion of existing buildings and the erection of a purpose built office building. As a result of these developments the site is now fully occupied by the office buildings and their associated car parking. The buildings have been maximised in terms of floorspace as can be seen from their design which takes the form of a 'stepped' footprint alongside the railway line to maximise the site coverage.

7.5 The area fronting New Road is mainly residential in character in the vicinity of the site. The most prominent building on the application site is the two storey office building which is set approximately 5.8m back from the pavement fronting New Road. This building is of domestic scale and is in proportion to the residential frontage to New Road. It is symmetrical in design with a central gable and slightly set back wings, all with pitched roofs. Tile hanging and good quality bricks help to provide an attractive appearance to the

building and break up its apparent mass and bulk. To the east of this building is a less prominent two storey building set approximately 10.6m back from the pavement to New Road. This building is relatively recessive in the street scene when compared to the larger and set forward main building.

7.6 The Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) policy CS16 together with the Havant Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011 set out the Council's design criteria in relation to new development.

7.7 Policy CS16 states that, *Planning permission will be granted for development that is designed to a high standard, which helps to create places where people want to live, work and relax. All development should demonstrate that its design:*

**1. Responds to, draws inspiration from and respects local context and** (amongst other matters):

*Identifies and responds positively to existing features of natural, historic or local character within or close to the proposed development site;*

*Uses the characteristics of the locality to help inform the design of the new development including heights, massing, existing buildings lines, plot widths and depths, materials and proportions of windows and doors;*

These criteria are considered particularly important to the consideration of the current application. In this case it is also necessary to consider whether changes made to the previously refused scheme are sufficient to overcome the concerns raised in the previous reason for refusal (see Part 2 above).

7.8 The current proposal is to extend the main building further to the south and west by the addition of a further two storey addition. As this is located at the narrowest part of the site the proposed extension would cover the full depth of the site and project in front of the existing main building towards New Lane. The roof would be positioned approximately 1.2m from the pavement to New Road with the front wall approximately 1.4m back. The extension would be different in style to the existing development on the site as it is open to the ground floor (to provide car parking). The roof design and materials including the front gable and side hipped roof and the use of tile hanging and brick detailing would pick up on some existing features of the main building.

7.9 The main changes in design terms between this and the previous application relate to the following:

Front Elevation:

Double hipped roof changed to hip and gable;

Render and tiled roof changed to tile hanging, brick detailing band and tiles to roof;

Changes to front window locations.

Set slightly further from site frontage

Rear Elevation:

Materials change as above.

Side Elevations:

Alterations to roof form

Materials change as above

These changes are considered to improve the appearance of the proposed extension when compared to the previous scheme. In particular the materials and roof form picks up on elements of the existing main building rather than the contrasting materials and roof

form of the previous application. There do however remain concerns in relation to the proposed development.

7.10 It is considered that notwithstanding the amendments made to the previous scheme, the proposed extension would remain a dominant element on the site being most prominently positioned adjacent to the site frontage. The symmetry and 'domestic scale' of the existing main building would be dominated by the forward projecting extension. The extension would also contrast in design and have a 'top heavy' non-domestic appearance although the tie in to the existing building in terms of materials and roof forms would help to reduce the visual impact. The maximisation of site coverage is also considered to result in a visual over-development of the site maximising the built form and detracting from the setting of the existing buildings.

7.11 Overall the negative aspects of the development identified above would need to be weighed against any economic benefits resulting from the development.

(iii) Impact on employment and business

7.12 The proposed extension would provide a modest additional office floorspace and therefore an opportunity for potential additional employment at the site. The previous application included no details in relation to existing or proposed employment; this application has included the following information:

*One key feature the scheme benefits from is its ability to adapt to the changing needs of the users over the its lifespan of the building. The applicant has always sort to create a place where people want to work within their locality and has expressed concerns to councillors over the lack of job opportunities for young people in particular, within their ward - with many having to travel as far as Southampton to find employment. The site has already proven that it is successful in recruiting local people and businesses and the potential to provide a further office unit can only increase the job opportunities that are available. The business case for this development is solid and is supported by the council's corporate strategy. As well as creating a new opportunity's for a local businesses in a new state of the art office facility which boasts 4G broadband, it also has close links to rail and bus as well as the motorway.*

7.13 A letter has also been submitted from Codepotato Limited who rent an office at Aura House. They comment on the attractiveness to businesses of the office accommodation at Aura House, the ideal location of the site and the fact that they may be looking to expand their facilities at the site.

7.14 The Councils Corporate Strategy seeks economic growth and environmental sustainability. Employment uses are supported by the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011. In particular policy CS2 states that *Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that (amongst other matters) Provide jobs, generate wealth or produce an economic output on existing employment sites that are not fit for current purpose*. It is however noted that in relation to offices that the plan favours *town centre locations for the provision of B1a offices and other town centre uses*. This site is not located within a town centre.

7.15 Whilst business use and any associated employment is a key priority of the Council this has to be balanced against the environmental impacts of the proposals (another key priority) highlighted in paragraphs 7.3 - 7.11 above. In this case officers consider that the employment and business opportunity provided by the development would not on balance override the clear concerns in relation to the character and visual amenities of the area that would result.

(iv) Impact upon residential amenity

7.16 The proposed extension is set well off the closest residential property and it is not considered that the proposals would result in any significant overlooking or overbearing impacts. The development would increase commercial activity at the site, however, given the busy context of New Road, West Street, the Bedhampton Level Crossing and Railway station, this would be a modest change in activity and is considered acceptable. Car parking is considered separately below.

(v) Car Parking/highway matters

7.17 The proposals together with the existing use would require the provision of 10 car parking spaces to meet the Councils Car Parking Standards. This is achieved on site by the open ground floor parking below the proposed extension. The parking plan shows 10 parking spaces. Parking is still tight on the site and this emphasises the complete site coverage and concerns highlighted above. The Development Engineer raises no objection in terms of parking as the car parking standard has been met, and car parking provision in itself was not cited as a reason for refusal of the previous scheme.

(vi) Environmental issues

7.18 The site is located adjacent to the railway line and busy roads. The non-residential nature of the development means that overnight noise impacts and sleep disturbance are not concerns. A noise impact assessment has been provided and should planning permission have been recommended a suitable condition in relation to noise could be imposed.

7.17 Given the proximity of the site to potential contaminants a planning condition in relation to contamination would have been appropriate should planning permission have been recommended.

## **8 Conclusion**

8.1 In conclusion, whilst the current proposal is considered to represent an improvement to the previously refused scheme, the revised proposal is still considered to have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area, detract from the appearance of the existing main building and result in an overdevelopment of the site. Whilst it is recognised that the development would provide additional business floorspace and employment opportunities, on balance and given the small scale of development these opportunities are relatively limited and are not considered to outweigh the environmental harm identified. A refusal of planning permission is therefore recommended.

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## **9 RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Head of Planning be authorised to **REFUSE PERMISSION** for application APP/17/00347 for the following reason:

1 The proposed Office Extension would by reason of its prominent siting, design, size, height, mass and bulk have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area, detract from the appearance of the existing main building and represent an overdevelopment of this shallow and constricted site. The proposal would therefore conflict with policy CS16 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011, the Havant Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Appendices:**

- (A) Location Plan
- (B) Existing Site Plan
- (C) Proposed Site Plan
- (D) Proposed Parking Plan
- (E) Existing and Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- (F) Existing and Proposed First Floor Plan
- (G) Existing Front and Rear Elevations
- (H) Proposed Front and Rear Elevations
- (I) Existing and Proposed North-East Side Elevations
- (J) Existing and Proposed South-West Side Elevations