

## Item 4b

Aura House, New Road, Havant  
Updated 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021

---

### Site View Working Party

A question was raised in relation to the planning history and the sites possible unsuitability for an increase in business use in relation to refused applications considered at previous Development Management Committees.

There are two previous refusals of most relevance considered below:

#### APP/17/00347 – Proposed 2 storey undercroft office extension

This application was considered at the Council's Development Management Committee on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and subsequently refused planning permission on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 for the following reason:

*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 Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011 and the National Planning Policy Frame*

Appeal Subsequently Dismissed on 1st December 20

The Committee report in relation to that application considered the impact on employment and business as follows:

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 Council's 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.

**Officer Comment:** It is clear from the report that the application was not refused in relation to the proposed business expansion but in relation to the impact on the character and appearance of the area and over development.

#### APP/16/00928 - Proposed two storey undercroft office extension

This application was determined at the Council's 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.*

The Committee report in relation to that application considered the impact on employment and business as follows:

7.11 The proposed extension would provide a modest additional office floorspace and therefore an opportunity for possible additional employment at the site. No details in relation to existing or proposed employment have been submitted with the application, however, 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.

7.12 No case has been put forward to state that this development is critical to the business viability of the site and indeed given the lack of an internal link between existing and proposed offices it would appear likely that the proposals would be for a stand alone office use.

7.13 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 - 7.10 above. In this case officers consider that the relatively modest additional employment and business opportunity provided by the development should not override the clear concerns in relation to the character and visual amenities of the area that would result from the proposed development.

**Officer Comment:** The above decision it is clear that the refusal of permission was not based on the proposed business expansion on the site but related to the character and appearance of the area and overdevelopment concerns.

It is also the case that following these refusals further office extensions were granted planning permission including the two storey extension APP/18/00499 which forms part of the current application.

The application under consideration would lead to the loss of business floorspace and this is considered in the Committee report.

### **Updates to the Officers Report:**

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

A further re-consultation response has been received from Environmental Health

#### **Environmental Health**

##### Final Comments

The two issues that you wish further comment on, are the following the following were:

##### Mechanical Ventilation

I am satisfied the ventilation could be provided to, however this is not optimum solution, as detailed in the ProPG: Planning & Noise Professional Practice Guidance on Planning & Noise. The proposed layout of the development, has windows facing onto, the two noisy facades (railway and road), meaning there is no quiet façade giving you rest bite. This position has been supported by the following planning appeal.

##### *Planning Appeal Decision by Herefordshire Council*

*Appeal decision APP/W1850/W/19/3229484 - dismissed*

*excerpt below (see Living Conditions - 23 to 28:*

*26. The noise assessment report goes on to recommend various mitigation measures to address the issue. This includes setting dwellings 18 metres back from the road, gable ends with no windows facing the roads and 2-metre-high garden fences. Bedrooms are expected to be at a high risk of traffic noise at night and therefore fan assisted ventilation is recommended so that windows could remain closed. In terms of external amenity areas, ProPG recommends noise levels should ideally not be above the range 50-55dB. The report suggests that even with the provision of acoustic fences, noise levels would still*

*achieve the lower end of this range. Whilst internal noise levels may achieve the standards with artificial ventilation systems, the external noise levels with mitigation would still be high. Accordingly, I consider that the living conditions of future occupiers would be adversely affected.*

### Vibration levels

I am satisfied vibration levels are satisfactory and the proposed development could be occupied for residential purposes without causing issues for occupiers.

## **6. Community Involvement**

### 3 additional representations received

- Support recommendation to refuse permission.
- Applications to convert Aura House to residential accommodation have been made before and refused on strong grounds. **Officer Comment:** Previous residential proposals have related to new build development.
- Proposed housing will not provide acceptable standard of accommodation and will be detrimental to Bedhampton.
- Please do the right thing for Bedhampton and reject this application.
  
- Object to planning application as the office block is wholly unsuitable for conversion to residential occupation on account of noise and ventilation.
- I have become expert MVHR systems over last thirty years.
- HVHR systems provide heat recovery in summer and winter. Unless a “summer block” is inserted in place of the heat exchanger, the HVHR will heat incoming air in summer raising the temperature of already hot south and west facing windows even more.
- We insert “summer block” in summer and replace heat exchanger in autumn when need inbuilt heat exchanger to provide heat recovery. Also have electrostatic filter fitted, no mention of such desirable filtering in submission.
- Follows that MVHR will further heat the rooms and property via south and west facing windows in summer, so necessitating need to open windows in summer to let excess heat out and noise in. With climate change requirement would increase.
- Solution to over-heating would be to fit heat-pump controlled full air conditioning system and this system provides good heating in winter and cooling in summer.
- Unreasonable for applicant to want to convert an office block to residential without providing even minimal consideration to the health and safety aspects of residents.
- Triple glazing will keep down noise, but also keeps in heat in summer and proposed MVHR system would exacerbate this to detriment of the health of the occupants.
- Urge Council to reject this planning application
  
- As Environmental Health report states, this is a completely unsuitable site for residential development.
- Note inclusion of a ventilation system in the design but it is unacceptable for occupants to be required to live in a hermetically sealed environment with explicit expectation that they will never want to open their windows.

- Property built originally with the view to eventually change into accommodation as hot water points and drainage were strategically placed ready to convert. **Officer Comment:** The application has been considered on its planning merits.
- Due to closeness to the railway line and busy road with little parking this should be declined as the well-being of the future residents will fall short of what should be considered acceptable.

#### 1 Further Comment from Havant Civic Society

- Agent argues Council has not got a 5 year housing supply and application should be approved.
- Our view is, that this is a poor quality speculative application, on a site which is not suitable for residential accommodation, which would only have a very minimal effect on the Council's housing target.

### 7. Planning Considerations

- 7.30 Updated comments are provided in relation to vibration issues in the Environmental Health comments above. Vibration impacts are not considered a reason for refusal.
- 7.46 The agent has not provided information as to the current occupancy and last use of the units.