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10th July 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

**Application for Change of Use of 23, Prospect Street, Caversham
from a mix of A1 retail and A2 Professional Services to a mix of A2
Professional Services and use for Psychologists' Consulting
Services for Leathes Psychology Limited.**

I am instructed by Dr Femke Leathes, Director and Founder of Leathes Psychology Limited, to make the above application to your Council. The application is submitted electronically via The Planning Portal and is accompanied by the following documentation:

- Planning Application Forms;
- Ownership Certificate B confirming Notice served on all relevant owners and leaseholders;
- Planning Application Fee of £462.00p;
- Site Location Plan on Ordnance Survey at a scale of 1:1,250, showing the application site outlined in red;

- Site Block Plan on Ordnance Survey at a scale of 1:500, showing the application site outlined in red; and the water and surface water and foul drainage connection to existing mains sewers in Prospect Street lined in blue;
- Planning Support Statement, dated 10th June 2019;
- Floor Plans of the existing building, prepared by Matt Andrews, Architect.

A INTRODUCTION

The applicant company, Leathes Psychology Ltd., is an existing firm of consulting psychologists practising from accommodation at 1, Prospect Street, Caversham, which lies approximately 45 metres to the south-west of the application site, at the junction of Prospect Street and North Street. The current location is no longer suitable for the Company and, wishing to remain in the immediate vicinity, Dr Leathes has identified the application site as a suitable alternative location.

The application site is currently vacant on the ground and first floors, having been a ladies' fashion shop on those floors, together with a small kitchen area. There is an architects' offices currently using the second floor. There is a small basement used for storage. The whole property has been marketed for sale recently by Local Chartered Surveyors, Messrs Dunster and Morton and my client has agreed to purchase the property subject to securing the appropriate change of use planning permission.

B SITE SPECIFIC CONTEXT

The application site comprises of a three storey building located within a terrace of approximately 105 metres in length on the south-eastern side of Prospect Street, and which runs uphill south-west to north-east between the junctions with North Street to the south-west and Short Street to the north-east. 23, Prospect Street is located in the middle of the terrace. The frontage comprises various businesses, mainly offices (B1A) and Financial and Professional Services (A2) on the upper floors, while the ground floors are a mix of A1 Retail, A2 Professional Services, Restaurants, and Hot Food Take-Away shops. A similar mixed use frontage occupies the north-west side of Prospect Street.

Prospect Street is part of the A4155 Reading to Henley Road. The road status and the highly developed urban nature of the area means that Prospect Street is very busy with both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. There are very good bus services for both local transit and also into Reading Centre, with its higher order services and facilities and other transport connections via the main line railway station.

The application site has a frontage width of 5.0 metres and a depth of 19.0 metres. The accommodation as existing is as follows:

Basement	Storage ancillary to A1 Use	26.49 sq.m
Ground Floor	A1 Retail to front	45.02 sq.m.
	Ancillary Storage	17.79 sq.m.
First Floor	A1 Retail	28.57 sq.m.
	Kitchen Area	3.88 sq.m.
Second Floor	A2 Professional Services	28.42 sq.m.
TOTAL		150.17 sq.m.

C PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2017

The National Planning Policy Framework has no direct guidance to offer in respect of the proposed development other than the general guidance given at Section 7 'Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres':

'85 Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:

a) Define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure

- industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive character.*
- b) Define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre....'***

2 Adopted Reading Borough Council Core Strategy 2008

Policies relating to 'Retail, Leisure and Culture' are set out at Section 8.

Policy CS26 'Network and Hierarchy of Centres' sets out a Hierarchy of Centres i.e. Regional, District, Major Local and Local Centres. Caversham is within the second tier i.e. District Centres. The policy requires that the vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced.

Policy 27 'Maintaining the Retail Character of Centres' states:

'A strong retail character will be maintained in the centres identified as being part of the network. Significant groupings of non-retail uses in one part of a centre will not be allowed'

3 Adopted Reading Borough Council Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012

Policy DM13 'Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres' states:

(i) 'Within the key frontages (identified on the Proposals Map), development involving a net loss of A1 retail to other 'centre uses' will only be permitted where:

- There would be no more than 3 consecutive units which are not in A1 retail use; and***

- ***The proportion of the total length of the Key Frontage within the centre that is in A1 retail use would exceed the relevant proportion below:***

....Caversham 50%'

The application site is located within a Key Frontage as defined on the Proposals Map.

A survey of the frontage on the south-eastern side of Prospect Street between Short Street to the north-east and North Street to the south-west reveals a total of 18 different businesses. Of those 13 are in A1 retail use. There is therefore a significant majority of A1 retail along this District Centre frontage. Adjoining the application site to the north-east is an A1 retail unit. Adjoining the application site to the south-west is an Indian Restaurant (non-A1 retail); and beyond that a Dental Surgery (non-A1 retail), beyond which is an A1 retail use. Changing the application site frontage from A1 to A2 would therefore mean an increase of non-retail uses from two to three consecutive non-A1 retail uses along the frontage. Three is the maximum non-A1 retail grouping allowed within the frontage under this policy. **The proposal therefore complies with Policy DM13 Bullet Point 1.**

Across the whole of the Caversham key frontage area there is a majority of A1 retail uses. The change of use thus sought by this application would do nothing to materially change that position. **The proposal therefore complies with Policy DM13 Bullet Point 2.**

D THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Leathes Psychology Limited is a firm of Consulting Psychologists and intends to be the primary occupier of the application site. A firm of accountants (JT Accountancy Ltd.) will occupy the ground floor, with a 'Financial and Professional Services A2 frontage. The Company has three employees working in total. They will operate from 09.00 to 17.30 Monday to Friday.

As a firm of Consulting Psychologists the applicant company is not directly locatable within one of the prescribed Use Classes in the current Use Classes Order. It provides a professional service and should therefore reasonably be within Use Class A2 'Financial and Professional Services'. However, that Use Class specifically excludes '*professional services (other*

than health and medical services)'. On the other hand it is clearly not within Use Class D1 'Non-Residential Institutions' because the service provided is not a clinic or a health centre in the normal sense. To avoid any confusion it has been assumed that the category of Consulting Psychologists may be construed as a '*sui generis*' use. Accordingly, the application seeks a mix of A2 and this specific *sui generis* use, since both would be appropriate across the whole of the application site premises.

Floors 1 and 2 will be occupied by the applicant company. There is no intention to make any material internal changes to the property other than normal refurbishment and redecoration of the interior. The Company only has one employee, the founder, Dr Leathes. It has ten contracted psychologists. There is a maximum of four psychologists using consulting rooms at any one time, controlled by appointment times. There will be five consulting rooms to provide resilience in operation. Operating hours will be 08.00 to 21.00 Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 Saturday. These are maximum hours and will not always apply in practice; it depends on demand from clients.

A significant reason for making the move is to have more space. The Company is currently turning people away. The contracted psychologists can offer more hours of consultancy but there is inadequate space to offer that additional service provision. As a result local people are either having to go onto a waiting list or travel outside of the area to secure the therapy they need.

There is no parking provision at either the applicant's existing location or at the application site. Employees/contractors and clients arrive by foot or bus or park in local car parks. The location is highly sustainable and private car use is minimised, in line with national planning policy guidance.

E CONCLUSIONS

The application site is on the frontage of a busy district centre location. There is little residential accommodation nearby (some of the upper floors in the terrace have been converted to flats). But the proposed uses are very quiescent such that residential amenity would not be an issue. The applicant company is an existing business in the locality and wishes to remain there. The application site meets their requirements very well. The proposed development complies with both national and local planning policy guidance, particularly in respect of policies seeking to secure the

vitality and viability of town and district centres. The proposal complies with the specific provisions of Local Plan Policy DM13.

In the light of these conclusions there would appear to be no reasonable grounds on which to oppose the granting of the change of use planning permission sought, subject to normal appropriate conditions. The Local Planning Authority is therefore requested to give sympathetic consideration to the proposed development.

If any additional information or clarification is required please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN W CORNWELL FRTPI

Chartered Town Planner