

PLANNING POLICY JUSTIFICATION

The existing use of the site is classed as an existing employment use, as set down within policy EC4 – Protection of Existing Employment Uses. Policy EC4 states that Proposals which would result in the loss of existing land or buildings in employment use as defined by policy EC3 and/or within the existing employment areas identified in policy EC2, will only be permitted where the following criteria are satisfied:

- . 1) It is demonstrated that employment uses are no longer viable or appropriate in this location; or
- . 2) Continued use for employment purposes would have unacceptable impacts on the environment, local amenity or adjacent uses; or
- . 3) The existing space can be redeveloped for employment uses that achieve an increased level of employment combined with other appropriate uses.

In reference to the above Policy criteria, the applicant has been struggling to maintain a stable income at the premises for a large number of years. Furthermore, the business is also so unviable that it barely generates enough income to support the sole employee who works at the site. In view of this, the applicant attempted to see if there was any interest in terms of other Commercial outfits purchasing the land to see if they could make a sustainable business out of the land. This was attempted by way of Marketing the premises as a Commercial Opportunity for investment.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned exercise into marketing the land for Business opportunities was an alarming failure. The premises was advertised for a period of in excess of 12 months and whilst it appeared in 35 thousand searches which means it was extensively visible online, only 727 people took to the time to visit the page and subsequently a single enquiry was made during the whole 13 month period. This enquiry turned out to be a ‘false lead’ as the individual did not provide details of their person or finances. The Estate Agent advertised the site at the Market value as to ensure it would generate the best price for the client which also meant it did not price potential suitors out of any investment.

The Planners will also be aware, that whilst the land use is historic, it is also what is defined as a ‘non-conforming use’. The Commercial enterprise is immediately adjacent to residential properties resulting in numerous unacceptable environment and residential amenity impacts on the adjacent land uses. The removal of such a use can only provide benefits to the area in terms of the obvious residential amenity improvements following its removal. The visual amenity of the area will also be enhanced as the character and appearance of the streetscene will be elevated by the proposal put forward by the client. Further improvements include the obvious increase in highway and pedestrian safety and positive environmental by-products by removing the industrial type land use from the site.

The Local Authority have a fantastic opportunity with this application to remove a non-conforming use and provide much needed starter-homes for the young inhabitants of this village. This is not an opportunity to be wasted.