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Dear Sirs

MO/2022/1467/CU

3, Guildford Road, Westcott, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3NR

Change of use of ground floor and basement from hairdresser (Use Class E) to residential use (Use Class C3)

I write in my capacity as planning lead for Westcott Village Association (WVA). WVA occasionally makes representations, as consultee, on behalf of the Westcott community, particularly where Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan policy might be relevant.

We highlight that 3 Guildford Road is a listed building and falls within the Westcott Conservation Area. We therefore believe a listed building application is also required given the fact that the proposal is likely to alter the external appearance of this building.

WVA would also like to highlight Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan Policy WNDP6 as follows:-

WNDP6 Objective

This policy is to prevent further conversion of retail property use to domestic dwellings, encourage greater diversity of retail offerings within the village, and in particular to assist in the re-occupation of vacant shop units with new retail business in general, and to secure the re-opening of the village Post Office in particular. Policy WNDP6 identifies the three blocks of retail premises in the Plan area and sets out the basis against which proposals for non-retail uses will be assessed. It also offers support to associated proposals that are intended to support these important retail areas. These could include improved access arrangements, car and cycle parking.

Policy WNDP6: Shops and Commercial Services

WNDP6: The following blocks of properties as shown on the Policies Map are safeguarded for retail use:

- Mace Stores and former Balchin's Stores, Guildford Road (between Westcott Street and Furlong Road)
- 2-6 Guildford Road (between Institute Road and Parsonage Lane)
- Masters House, Guildford Road (site of Westcott Bakery)

Within these areas changes of use from retail use to other uses will not be supported unless:

- The property has been marketed for a minimum period of six months for alternative retail use without success; and
- It can be clearly demonstrated that a retail use is no longer financially viable.

Proposals within the defined retail areas designed to assist in the retention or the establishment of new retail units or otherwise to improve the general operation of the retail areas will be supported where they respect the character of the areas concerned and otherwise comply with development plan policies.

Justification

The survey illustrated that a significant proportion of respondents frequently used the village store, newsagents and bakery. The existing facilities provide a very valuable, and in some cases vital, social function. Without them the environmental impact of having to drive to neighbouring towns and villages for basic retail needs would be seriously detrimental.

This policy is underpinned by MVDC Core Strategy Policy CS11 and paragraph 6.2.37 which states that the Council's strategy includes:

- Supporting the provision of small-scale local facilities to meet local community needs

- Taking into account the importance of shops and services to the local community in assessing proposals that would result in their loss or change
- Supporting proposals to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities that play an important role in sustaining village communities.

No evidence of marketing has been provided by the applicant to demonstrate that a change of use is justified. It is also worth noting that, although 6 Guildford Road has been marketed for some time, we are aware that it is now under offer for a proposed commercial use and demonstrates a level of interest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Leaver', written in a cursive style.

James Leaver
Planning Lead, Westcott Village Association