Planning Statement

SITE: 75 Upper Brighton Road, Sompting, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 0JQ

DATE: August 2017

PROPOSAL: Change of Use from Car Sales Showroom (*Sui-Generis*) to Mobility and Care Products Showroom (*Sui-Generis*)

On behalf of CareCo (UK) Ltd

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Site: 75 UPPER BRIGHTON ROAD, SOMPTING, LANCING, WEST SUSSEX BN15 0JQ

Client: **CareCo (UK) Limited**

Our Ref: **JO/RLD/mac/8688**

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SECTION 1:00: INTRODUCTION

1.01 The Applicant, CareCo (UK) Ltd, is seeking to occupy 75 Upper Brighton Road, Sompting, Lancing, West Sussex BN24 0JQ as a mobility and care products showroom (sui-generis), with ancillary storage area.

1.02 The proposed change of use is a re-submission of a previous application that was withdrawn in August 2016, when the sale of the property fell through.

1.03 This Planning Statement forms part of the supporting documentation for an application for the above proposals.

1.04 CareCo is a leading independent distributor of mobility products, with over 14 years' experience within the mobility market as a group. The Company has a range of over 5000 products, designed for indoor and outdoor use, to assist the user with improved mobility and quality of life. Products include mobility scooters, wheelchairs, walking frames, bath lifts, hoists, electric adjustable beds and rise recliner chairs. CareCo also trades in other 'living aids' such as kitchen gadgets (jar and bottle openers/large grip cutlery), talking alarm clocks, large face watches, amplified telephones, dressing aids (shoe horns and elastic shoe laces), and washing and hygiene products.

1.05 CareCo has 7 showrooms in Brentwood (Essex), Birmingham, Hayes (West London), Croydon, Eastbourne, Norwich and Leicester, with the main business, including the distribution centre, run from the Brentwood premises. CareCo is seeking to expand the business and establish a showroom facility in the South East region.

1.06 The Company has a significant internet presence and orders are secured either on-line or via the call centre (based at Brentwood), where the products are stored and distributed.

1.07 The number of customers visiting each showroom is limited (approximately 10-15 a day), but a showroom presence remains an important aspect of the business. This site offers a good location where there is ease of access for customers looking to view any products available before a purchase is made. Any large / bulkier items that are ordered will be sent out from the Brentwood premises.

SECTION 2:00: SITE DESCRIPTION

2.01 75 Upper Brighton Road is a two storey unit comprising a car showroom and ancillary garage / workshop at ground floor, with ancillary offices and residential accommodation above. It is located on the south side of the A27 and occupies a corner position at the junction where Upper Brighton Road connects with Busticle Lane at Sompting.

2.02 Vehicular access is off Busticle Lane and there is space for up to 24 cars to park on the forecourt area. There is an existing drop kerb at the vehicular access point.

2.03 The property faces northwest towards the junction. The showroom shopfront includes a customer entrance and doors by which cars can be moved onto, and off, the display area. There is separate vehicle and pedestrian access to the garage / workshop. The ancillary offices and residential accommodation on the first floor can be accessed both internally and by a set of external stairs at the rear of the building.

SECTION 3:00: PLANNING HISTORY

3.01 The property has had several alterations, conversions and repairs works carried out since the early 1990's.

3.02 The most recent application (LPA Reference: AWDM/1004/16) was for a change of use to a mobility and care products showroom (sui generis), which was withdrawn on 17th August 2016, because the sale of the premises fell through. The current proposals are a re-submission of that scheme.

3.03 An application (LPA Reference: S/74/00/TP/18838) for 'alterations to convert the first floor flat to offices, WC's and Wash Facilities, incidental to car showroom and workshop, and create a new external fire escape staircase on the south west side', was granted consent in December 2000.

3.04 In January 1995, planning permission was granted for the 'formation of pitched roofing, alterations, removal of canopy, replacement of workshop roofing and associated improvements', under LPA Reference: S/39/94/TP/15712.

3.05 Advertisement consent was given in December 1994 for an internally – illuminated pole sign at front and non-illuminated signs on buildings and wall (existing canopy and signs to be removed), under LPA Reference: S/37/94/TP/15712.

3.06 An application for a certificate of lawfulness for the display of vehicles for sale on the forecourt and for the use of power-driven machinery for MOT testing and general workshop use, was permitted on 29th September 1994, under LPA Reference: S/25/94/TP/15603.

3.07 An application for extensions (MOT bays) was refused on 13th February 1990 under S/1/90/TP/E120.

SECTION 4:00: THE PROPOSALS

4.01 The type of business seeking to operate from 75 Upper Brighton Road is a Mobility and Care Products Showroom, which is a *sui generis* use (i.e. a use on its own for which any change of use requires planning permission).

4.02 The site is currently in use as vehicle car sales showroom (Sui-Generis use), with the garage / workshop and offices and residential use all being ancillary. The site is a single planning unit.

4.03 The proposed showroom will display a range of mobility and care products offered by CareCo (UK) Ltd, so that customers can to view before deciding to make a purchase. The existing garage / workshop will be used for storage and the ancillary first floor offices and residential accommodation will be retained. The premises will remain a single planning unit.

4.04 The Company has a significant internet presence and purchases can be made on-line or via the call centre based at the Brentwood premises. The number of customers visiting each showroom is limited (approximately 10-15 a day) and, therefore, the number of visitors anticipated at the premises at 75 Upper Brighton Road will be relatively low. A maximum of two staff are envisaged to be on duty at any one time. Some stock will be stored at the premises (in the ancillary garage / workshop area) and any large purchases made sent out from the warehouse at Brentwood.

4.05 Deliveries to the premises will be made via small transit vans, utilising the existing access arrangements from Busticle Lane. Deliveries are limited; approximately 1 per week during trading hours.

SECTION 5:00: DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework

5.01 On the 27th March 2012, the Government published the NPPF. Its intention was to refocus planning policy on encouraging growth and it includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

5.02 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which has three dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. It advises that the weight to be given to each of these should be considered when determining a planning application. The NPPF advises that for decision making, this means (unless material considerations indicate otherwise): -

- *Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *Where the development plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless: -*
    - *Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
    - *Specific policies in this Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

5.03 Paragraph 21 of the NPPF sets out that investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of panning policy expectations. In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:

- *Support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.*
- *Facilitate flexible working practices such as the integration of residential and commercial uses within the same unit*

Local Development Framework

5.04 The current Development Plan consists of the saved policies from the Adur District Local Plan 1996. A new draft Local Plan is currently being prepared and the Council has recently published ‘Amendments to the Proposed Submission Adur Local Plan (2016)’.

5.05 The site is located within a built up area and does not have any site specific designation. The use of the building has been in Sui-Generis use (Car Showroom).

Adopted Adur Local Plan (1996)

5.06 The adopted Adur Local Plan (1996) identifies in Policy AE1 the targets for providing floorspace for business, industry, and warehousing development.

'*The Local Plan provides a minimum of 82,000 square metres of new floorspace for business, industry and warehousing development falling within Use Classes B1-B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. This will comprise:-*

A) The estimated floorspace resulting from extensions and alterations to existing premises or the redevelopment of sites in existing business use.

B) The development of new sites, allocated in this Local Plan (Development Proposals DP.AE1-DP.AE11), to include the land between East Worthing Access Road and Worthing's built up area as shown in Development Proposal DP.AE3.

C) A proportion of the floorspace resulting from development of Shoreham Cement Works. This provision will include a range of sizes and types of site including some suitable for small firms, offices, warehousing and high technology industry.'

5.07 Policy AE16 Existing businesses in residential areas relates to existing businesses in residential areas and sets out that within the built-up area, the District Planning Authority will permit alterations or improvements of existing business premises which are required to improve the efficiency of the existing business, providing:

(a) On-site car parking arrangements and access to the public highway are acceptable under Policy AT12 and

(b) There are no significant adverse effects on the amenity of nearby residents.

Submission Adur Local Plan (2016)

5.08 The emerging Local Plan outlines the Spatial Strategy for the District in Policy 2.

"Up to 2031 the delivery of new development in Adur will be managed as follows: Development within the Built Up Area Boundaries of Lancing, Sompting, Shoreham-by-Sea, Southwick and Fishersgate will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the development plan".

5.09 Policy 4: Planning for Economic Growth

"To facilitate regeneration and ensure a sustainable economy, a total of approximately 41,000 square metres of land will be allocated for appropriate employment generating uses in Adur up to 2031 at the following locations:

- *Shoreham Airport (approximately 15,000 sqm)*
- *New Monks Farm (approximately 10,000sqm)*
- *Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Area (approximately 16,000 sqm within Adur)*

These allocations will provide a range of employment sites in terms of locations and sizes, and provision will be made within these allocations for a range of accommodation types.

Further economic development at the site to the north of the airport, currently occupied by Ricardo, will be supported subject to other policies in this Plan.

In addition to the above provision, additional employment floorspace will also be achieved through redevelopment, intensification, change of use to employment, and provision of new employment sites. The majority of this floorspace will be provided within the town centres and the main existing employment areas.

Outside of designated employment areas, where new development for, or extensions to B1, B2 and B8 uses is proposed, such applications will only be permitted where it is demonstrated they will not have an unacceptable impact on adjacent residential properties and they comply with other policies in this Plan.

Criteria for the identification and provision of new employment floorspace will include the need to provide a variety of new business premises including small and medium sized premises; the need to meet the modern needs of businesses in terms of floorspace, security, quality of environment, good access and services, and ensuring there are no conflicts with neighbouring uses".

Comment

5.10 The site is not within one of the defined areas for business and industrial purposes (Class B1 and B2) as set out in Policy AE2. The surrounding land uses comprises residential dwellings with some industrial, retail and commercial businesses in the area. The proposed use is similar in nature to the existing use and is considered appropriate for this location. In principle, there should be no objection to the proposed use which complies with the relevant Local Plan policies.

SECTION 6:00: PLANNING ISSUES

6.01 The main planning issues for the LPA to consider are:

- Acceptability of the proposal in principle.
- Traffic generation, access, parking and servicing.
- Impact on the character of the area.

Acceptability of Proposal in Principle

6.02 The proposed use is similar to the previous lawful use (car showroom – Sui-Generis) in terms of employment and trip generation. The employment function of the site will not be undermined by the proposed change of use.

6.03 The showroom floorspace will be used for the display of mobility and care products. The garage area will be set aside for stock storage and will remain ancillary to the showroom. Customers will view the products and be able to purchase small items. Any large orders placed will be directed to the Brentwood premises and products despatched from there.

6.04 The planning history demonstrates that this site has been deemed acceptable for Sui-Generis showroom type uses.

Traffic Generation, Access, Parking and Servicing

6.05 The proposed use is not a high traffic generator. It is envisaged that there will be 3 staff members (2 full time, 1 part time) and approximately 10-15 customers per day visiting the unit.

6.06 In relation to parking, the unit provides up to 24 spaces on the forecourt, with there also being an area for service vehicles to park and unload. The number of spaces reflects the employment and visitor levels associated with a showroom business. This form of showroom provides good car parking and easy ground floor accessibility and is ideal for its clientele, many of whom are frail or have disabilities.

6.07 The level of car parking provision is considered appropriate and is justified by the particular use proposed for the building.

6.08 In addition, the site is easily accessible by public transport. There are two bus stops located on Busticle lane, adjacent to the property, offering services to / from Lancing and High Salvington. The services run on an hourly basis throughout the day.

6.09 Deliveries will consist of a small number of trips by small transit vans dropping off product supplies. This will typically be wheelchair, scooters, walking sticks, incontinence pads and recliner seats. The Company uses City Link and Parcel Force for deliveries and it is anticipated that there will be approximately three vans per day. Off-loading times tend to be fairly quick as the products are not bulky goods and can be carried easily to the delivery entrance. Given that heavy goods vehicles will not be used and as the use proposed is a low traffic generator, there is unlikely to be conflict with customers visiting the premises.

Impact on the Character of the Area

6.10 The site is not in a designated employment area, however, there are a number of commercial buildings in the immediate vicinity, which provide both employment and services to local residents. There is a small neighbourhood parade to the north of the A27, that consists of commercial / retail properties on the ground floor and residential units on the first floor. The units include a convenience store and D.I.Y. store.

6.11 The immediate area is primarily a residential area with a variety of dwelling styles to the east and south of the site.

6.12 The wider area is characterised by commercial / industrial uses located on Rectory Farm Road, off Busticle Lane. The proposed use for 75 Upper Brighton Road is not dissimilar in nature to the car showroom business that previously operated from the premises. As such, the proposed use will not harm the character of the area and will comply with saved local Plan Policy AE16.

SECTION 7:00: CONCLUSION

7.01 It is proposed to use 75 Upper Brighton Road is for the display and sale of mobility and care products. As the products tend to be of a larger size (wheelchairs and scooters), customers will not generally take them away with them. They will, instead, be delivered from the main distribution warehouse based in Brentwood.

7.02 The proposed change of use will not result in any material harm to the area. The proposals will retain the employment on the site and will not significantly alter the existing traffic and parking profile or harm the amenities of the area.. The proposed change of use is' therefore, in accordance with the saved policies of the adopted local plan (1996).