

PLANNING STATEMENT

Change of use – Class B1(a) to Class E(a) for the purposes of use as a Convenience Store.

1B & 1C Bridge Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1UA

Executive Statement

Change of use of the front part of the premises from an electrical wholesale and retail trade-counter operation with ancillary storage and offices to a convenience store within Use Class E(a), with no external alterations.

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application relating to the commercial premises known as **1B and 1C Bridge Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 1UA**.

The proposal would not involve any extension to the building or any material alteration to its existing footprint or internal layout. The proposed occupier would operate from the existing showroom, trade-counter area, two existing office rooms and the internal circulation and exit area shown on the submitted floor plan.

2. Site and Surrounding Area

2.1 - The application property is a long-established commercial premises located on Bridge Road in Haywards Heath. The property is situated as the first property within the Bridge Road commercial and industrial area while also being accessible to nearby residential neighbourhoods. The surrounding context therefore includes commercial activity, employees and visitors travelling to and from nearby businesses, together with residents living within the surrounding area.

2.2 - The premises already contain areas used for customer access, product display, transactions, storage, administration, deliveries and circulation. The proposal would reuse this existing commercial accommodation without expanding the building or materially changing its physical form.

3. Existing Use and Operations

3.1 - The premises have been occupied by **DT Electrical Supplies** for approximately 25 years. DT Electrical Supplies has operated from the site as an electrical supplier selling electrical goods, equipment and related products. Its customers have included electricians, tradespeople, commercial customers and members of the public.

The existing operation has contained several interrelated elements:

1. The display of electrical goods and products within the showroom;
2. Customer access to the premises;
3. Sales to visiting customers;
4. A trade counter at which orders and transactions are completed;
5. Collection of goods by customers and tradespeople;
6. Receipt of deliveries from suppliers;
7. Storage of electrical products and stock;
8. Movement of goods between the storage and customer-facing areas; and
9. Office and administrative activities associated with the business.

3.2 - Customers presently enter the customer-facing part of the premises and access the showroom and trade-counter area. Electrical goods are displayed and made available for purchase, while orders and payments are processed at the existing counter.

3.3 - Deliveries of stock are received at the premises via the side access door and products are stored before being displayed, sold or collected. Storage and distribution activities have therefore supported the principal commercial activity undertaken from the site.

3.4 - The office areas have been used for administrative functions associated with DT Electrical Supplies, including customer administration, invoicing, account management, purchasing, bookkeeping and general business management.

The existing operation is therefore more accurately described by reference to its established activities than simply as an office use. It comprises a customer-facing electrical wholesale and retail business incorporating a showroom, trade counter, customer collections, stock storage, deliveries and ancillary administration.

3.5 - The applicant acknowledges that the precise planning classification of the existing operation must be determined by the Local Planning Authority by reference to:

- The planning history of the property;
- Any existing planning permissions and conditions;
- The lawful use of the premises;
- The relative scale of the showroom, trade counter and storage activities;
- The nature and frequency of customer visits;
- The extent of sales to trade customers and members of the public;
- The arrangements for deliveries and collections; and
- Whether the different activities amount to a single composite use or a principal use with ancillary elements.

For that reason, this application does not rely solely upon the previous description of the premises as Class B1(a). Instead, it provides a fuller description of the activities that have taken place at the site so that the Local Planning Authority can assess the existing and proposed uses on an informed basis.

4. Proposed Development

4.1 - Winners Convenience Store Ltd proposes to occupy unit 1C Bridge Road, identified on the submitted plan. The proposed tenant would use the accommodation as follows:

Existing front showroom

The existing showroom would become the principal convenience-store sales area. Shelving, display units, refrigerated units and other normal retail fixtures would be installed within the existing space. The area would be used for the display and retail sale of groceries, drinks, household essentials, packaged products, chilled foods, snacks and other everyday convenience goods.

Existing showroom trade counter

The existing trade counter would be retained in its present position and would continue to function as the principal point at which customers complete transactions. Although the nature of the goods being sold would change, the functional use of this part of the premises would remain broadly comparable to the present arrangement: customers would enter the premises, select or request goods and complete their purchases at the counter.

Office 1

One existing office would continue to be used for administrative purposes associated with the operation of the convenience store. Activities would include stock administration, ordering, staff administration, record keeping, accounts and general business management.

Office 2

The second office would be used for the storage of stock and operational supplies connected with the convenience store. This would be a small-scale ancillary storage area supporting the principal retail use. It would not operate as a separate warehouse, distribution centre or independent storage business.

Internal circulation and exit area

The existing internal circulation area, shown in yellow on the submitted floor plan, would remain available for access, circulation and passage to the existing exit. It would not be materially altered and would continue to provide movement through the premises and access to the relevant external doorway.

4.2 - No changes are proposed to the positions of the existing internal walls, rooms, customer entrance, trade counter or circulation areas. The proposed tenant would make use of the existing arrangement because it already provides:

- A customer-facing sales area;
- An established transaction counter;
- Office and administrative accommodation;
- Ancillary stock storage;
- Internal circulation;
- Existing entrance and exit arrangements; and
- Established commercial servicing arrangements.

4.3 - Any new shelving, refrigeration equipment, display stands or movable retail fixtures would be internal shop-fitting works and would not alter the fundamental layout or external form of the building.

5. Proposed Use Class

5.1 - The principal proposed use is the operation of a convenience store selling goods to visiting members of the public. The proposed principal use therefore falls within **Class E(a)**. The proposed convenience store would not principally operate as a café or restaurant. Accordingly, the proposal is not being advanced principally under Class E(b), which relates to the sale of food and drink principally for consumption on the premises.

5.2 - The principal purpose of the premises would be the retail sale of groceries, drinks, packaged goods and everyday convenience products. There would be no dedicated restaurant or café seating area and customers would not principally visit the premises to consume meals on site.

5.3 - The overall character of the operation would remain that of a local convenience shop. Most of the floor area, product range, customer activity and turnover would relate to ordinary convenience retail goods.

6. Comparison of Existing and Proposed Operations

6.1 - The proposal would change the range of goods sold but would retain many of the operational characteristics of the established use.

Existing operation	Proposed operation
Display of electrical goods	Display of convenience goods
Sales to tradespeople and the public	Sales principally to the public
Existing showroom	Convenience-store sales area
Existing trade counter	Retained retail transaction counter
Stock received from suppliers	Convenience stock received from suppliers
Ancillary storage	Ancillary convenience-store storage
Customer visits and collections	Customer visits and purchases
Office administration	Convenience-store administration
Existing entrance and exit arrangements	Existing entrance and exit arrangements

6.2 - The building is already configured for customers to enter, view goods and complete purchases. The proposal therefore represents the continued commercial use of an existing customer-facing premises rather than the introduction of a wholly new type of activity into a previously non-commercial building.

The proposed use would not require the enlargement of the premises, the creation of a new servicing yard or any material alteration to the existing building.

7. Principle of Development

7.1 - The proposal would bring the unit 1C Bridge Road premises into continued productive commercial use following the vacating of the tenant DT Electrical Supplies Ltd.

7.2 - It would avoid a potentially prolonged vacancy and would support continuing economic activity at an established commercial property. Offering a greater service to nearby the residential community and that of the industrial community that operates within the Bridge Road estate.

7.3 - The National Planning Policy Framework requires significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking account of local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It also supports the efficient use of existing land and buildings, subject to the environmental and amenity effects being acceptable.

7.4 - The proposed convenience store would:

- Support the continued commercial occupation of the premises;
- Provide employment;
- Support a local business;
- Make efficient use of an existing building;
- Provide convenient access to everyday goods;
- Serve employees and visitors within the nearby commercial area;
- Serve residents within the surrounding area; and
- Reduce the risk of the premises becoming vacant.

7.5 - The property occupies a position where it can provide a useful service to people travelling to and from nearby businesses as well as surrounding residential areas. The store would offer access to everyday items such as milk, bread, drinks, snacks, groceries and lunchtime products.

8. Retail and Town-Centre Considerations

8.1 - Retail development is defined by national planning policy as a main town-centre use. The proposal is, however, for the reuse of a relatively modest existing commercial unit as a local convenience store. It is not a supermarket, retail park or major destination retail development.

8.2 - The proposed store would primarily meet day-to-day convenience needs and would be expected to draw a significant proportion of its trade from:

- Employees working in nearby commercial premises;
- Tradespeople and visitors travelling through the Bridge Road area;
- Passing customers;
- Residents of nearby neighbourhoods.

The proposal would not involve a substantial increase in floorspace or the construction of a new out-of-centre retail building.

9. Highways, Parking and Servicing

9.1 - The premises already generate customer visits, supplier deliveries and collections through the operation of DT Electrical Supplies. It has existing parking available to the tenant of the site's and will continue to provide adequate parking in relation to the intended use.

9.2 - The proposed use would continue to receive deliveries of stock, but the nature of those deliveries would change from electrical products to convenience-store goods. Deliveries would use the established access and servicing arrangements associated with the premises. No new access is proposed.

9.3 - The proposal would not involve an extension of the building or an increase in its overall commercial floor area. A convenience store may generate a different pattern of customer visits from an electrical wholesaler, with potentially more frequent but shorter visits. However, the premises are already located within an established commercial area and already accommodate visiting customers and deliveries.

9.4 - National planning policy requires transport matters to be considered from the early stages of development proposals and supports opportunities for sustainable transport where appropriate.

Subject to confirmation of the proposed operating hours, delivery arrangements and any relevant parking information, the proposal is not expected to result in any residual cumulative highway impact.

10. Residential and General Amenity

10.1 - The proposal would continue the commercial occupation of an existing commercial premises. No external extension or significant physical alteration is proposed.

10.2 - The convenience store would principally operate indoors. The customer sales area, counter, office and storage functions would all be contained within the existing building. The use would not involve industrial manufacturing, heavy machinery or an external processing operation.

10.3 - No significant external noise source is proposed. Potential noise would principally arise from ordinary customer activity and periodic deliveries, activities that are consistent with the commercial character of the premises and surrounding area.

10.4 - The applicant would accept appropriately worded and necessary planning conditions concerning opening hours, delivery hours, external plant or extraction equipment where such conditions are justified by the particular circumstances of the site.

11. Waste Management

11.1 - Commercial waste would be stored securely within an appropriate designated area pending collection by a licensed commercial waste contractor. The operator would manage cardboard, packaging and recyclable materials separately where practicable.

11.2 - The nature and scale of waste generated by the convenience store would be typical of a small retail premises and could be managed through standard, existing, commercial waste arrangements. Waste would not be permitted to obstruct customer access, circulation routes, emergency exits or neighbouring premises.

12. Design and Physical Effects

The proposal principally concerns the use of the premises and does not involve an extension or material change to the building's footprint. The existing internal arrangement would be retained. The existing showroom, trade counter, office rooms and circulation areas would be adapted through normal internal retail fitting-out works.

The proposal would therefore preserve the established form and commercial character of the property.

Any replacement advertisements or signage requiring express advertisement consent would be dealt with separately where necessary.

13. Accessibility

13.1 - The proposed tenant would use the existing customer entrance and internal circulation arrangement.

13.2 - The shop-fitting process would seek to maintain clear customer circulation routes and avoid unnecessary obstruction within the sales area.

13.3 - The operator would also be required to comply with applicable requirements under the Building Regulations and equality legislation. These are separate from the determination of the planning application.

14. Environmental and Biodiversity Considerations

14.1 - The proposal would reuse an existing building without extending its footprint.

14.2 - No loss of undeveloped land, trees, habitats or landscaped areas is proposed.

14.3 - The application concerns an internal change in the commercial activity undertaken within the existing premises. It would therefore have no direct material effect on wildlife or biodiversity arising from physical development.

14.4 - The reuse of an existing building also avoids the construction impacts and material consumption that would arise from developing a new standalone retail building.