

Planning Application 17/10151/FUL – Conversion of empty shop to two flats at Hawthorn Post Office, Westwells Road, Hawthorn – a representation

Background

1. Six major housing developments: Bellway – 100 homes, Redcliffe – 170 homes, Redrow – 170 homes, Framptons (ex RAF Rudloe No. 2 Site) – 180 homes, Hannick – 88 homes and de Vernon (Potley) – 64 homes are either under development or in the planning pipeline in west Corsham. In addition, smaller developments are underway – the 10-home ex-Flamingo site for example, adjacent to the subject site.
2. Just the developments listed above indicate that west Corsham will effectively become a significant conurbation – 782 new homes with the ‘standard’ 2.3 people per home will see a population increase of 1,800. Add to this the population of Wadswick Green retirement village - a conservative estimate would be 300, and our population **increase** easily tops two thousand.
3. So the population of the west Corsham conurbation, including west Pickwick, Rudloe, Hawthorn, Westwells and Neston (which lost its post office many years ago) will be in the order of five thousand.
4. In addition the MoD Basil Hill complex, with over two thousand employees and hundreds of visitors per day, lies just across Westwells Road from the post office and shop.
5. With the closure of the last bank in Corsham (Lloyds), there are now significant queues at Corsham Post Office not least because it is the only place where local businesses can now pay in a day’s takings or make other transactions.

The Viability of Hawthorn Post Office and Shop

1. A retired senior bank manager produced a viable business plan and had an offer accepted for the shop/post office. The plan was approved by supplier Central Stores and by the Post Office who offered a licence to recommence Post Office trade and was prepared to provide a loan for essential works. Also, the Central Stores organization was prepared to provide a loan for racking and computer equipment.
2. The Post Office was keen to keep a presence at the location so it seems that the continuation of a post office and shop was a viable proposition.

Post Office and Shop or more Development?

1. It seems that we have a similar situation here to that of The Two Pigs at Pickwick which was lost to the local community after 250 years. The owners of The Two Pigs lived on the premises and wished to remain and retire so the continuation of the premises as a pub was, unfortunately, not possible.
2. The Hawthorn Post Office and Stores situation is similar but not the same as the owners and (former) proprietors live elsewhere (I believe). Continuation as a post office and shop would therefore still be possible but is perhaps not in the owners' best interests. It would, however, be in the best interests of the local community as indicated in the Background section above.
3. The last thing that west Corsham needs with all the development going on or planned is even more housing development. The community needs services! But we do not have services – even those that we did have are gone: Rudloe shop, Rudloe Community Centre, The Two Pigs, Neston Post Office, Pickwick Stores and if

this planning application receives consent, Hawthorn Post Office and Stores.

4. This is really no contest – post office and shop or two more dwellings in an area about to become an enormous conurbation. The winner by a country mile is the former.

The Future

Perhaps a ‘new’ location for a west Corsham post office might be Rudloe Community Centre which is ‘on the market’ for business proposals. The Centre is certainly big enough for a post office and shop and is at the heart of the Rudloe estates. However, by the same token, it is much further away from Hawthorn, Westwells, Neston and Basil Hill.

Paul Turner
29 Springfield Close
Rudloe

20th November 2017