

Marketing Statement and Response to Concerns Regarding Employment Floorspace

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Proposed Development at 7 King Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2EB

We understand the concerns raised regarding the proposed loss of employment floorspace and the need for evidence on the marketing and viability of the existing office space, in line with Policy CS07 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

In response, we wish to clarify the current condition of the building and provide insight into the feedback received from multiple estate agents regarding the market trends, as well as the challenges in maintaining the building as office space. We also wish to demonstrate how the proposed development will benefit the local area by bringing the building back to a good standard while addressing the need for housing.

1. Condition of the Building and Feedback from Estate Agents

Over the past 12 months, the building at 7 King Street, Gravesend, has been assessed for its suitability for continued office use. During this period, we have sought feedback from several local estate agents and commercial property specialists, who have provided valuable insight into the current market conditions.

- **Building Condition:** The building is not in a stable condition for office use in its current state. Structural and internal issues require substantial renovation to make it viable for modern commercial use. In its present form, the property does not meet the needs of businesses seeking office space in the area.
- **Market Trends:** The estate agents have highlighted a significant shift in the demand for office space within Gravesend. There is a noticeable trend towards a preference for modern, flexible workspaces and a decline in the demand for older, traditional office spaces. Given the age and condition of the building, the viability of attracting tenants for commercial use has been minimal.
- **Cost of Renovation:** Feedback from the estate agents also indicated that the level of investment required to bring the property up to modern office standards would be prohibitively high. The costs of renovation are unlikely to be recoverable through rental income from office tenants, especially given the lack of demand for traditional office space in the area.

2. Proposed Development and Its Benefits

Given the condition of the building and the current market trends, the estate agents have advised that the most viable option for the site would be to undergo a major redevelopment that includes residential use, alongside retaining commercial space on the ground floor. This approach would bring several benefits to the local council and the community, including:

- **Bringing the Building Back to a Good Standard:** The proposed redevelopment would significantly improve the condition of the building, revitalising a currently underutilised and deteriorating property. The planned renovation would not only

enhance the building's appearance but also ensure it meets modern safety and energy efficiency standards.

- **Providing Much-Needed Housing:** The conversion of the upper floors into residential flats would directly respond to the growing demand for housing in Gravesend. The addition of high-quality residential units would contribute to meeting local housing needs and support the wider objectives of the council's housing strategy.
- **Retaining Commercial Space:** The commercial space on the ground floor would be retained, ensuring the property continues to provide opportunities for local businesses or retailers. This mix of residential and commercial use aligns with the need to provide housing while also contributing to the local economy by maintaining a commercial presence.

3. Relevant Planning Policies Supporting the Application

In addition to **Policy CS07** of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, several other planning policies and principles support the proposed redevelopment and provide a strong case for its approval:

- **Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development:** The proposed development aligns with the principles of sustainable development, as it seeks to maximise the use of an existing building, promoting the efficient use of land. By converting an underutilised office space into residential accommodation and retaining commercial use on the ground floor, the scheme supports mixed-use development, contributes to reducing urban sprawl, and ensures the efficient use of resources.
- **Policy CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development:** The proposed development is in line with the objectives of Policy CS02, which seeks to provide residential development in sustainable locations. Gravesend is identified as a key area for growth within the Core Strategy, and the site's central location within the town provides easy access to local services, amenities, and transport links. The conversion of the building to residential use meets the demand for housing in a highly sustainable area.
- **Policy CS15 – Housing Provision:** This policy seeks to meet the identified housing need within Gravesham, particularly through the redevelopment of underused and vacant sites. The proposed residential units on the upper floors directly respond to this policy, helping to meet the local housing demand. The scheme would also contribute to the regeneration of an area that has seen limited investment in recent years.
- **Policy CS12 – Development and the Historic Environment:** The building, though in poor condition, lies within a historic area. The proposed development respects the local character by retaining the commercial space on the ground floor, ensuring the building remains a vibrant part of the streetscape. The redevelopment would also provide an opportunity for the building's restoration, enhancing the visual amenity of the area in line with local heritage policies.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Paragraph 11:** The NPPF encourages the use of brownfield sites for development, and the proposed redevelopment of 7 King Street aligns with the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development. The re-use of this underutilised building is in accordance with national

policy objectives to regenerate urban areas and provide new housing in sustainable locations.

4. Response to Policy CS07

We fully understand the objectives of Policy CS07 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, which seeks to protect employment floorspace. However, the feedback from local estate agents and the building's poor condition make it clear that the existing office space is no longer viable for commercial use. The proposed development will provide a balanced solution that meets the demand for housing while ensuring that the site continues to contribute to the local economy through retained commercial space.

Conclusion

The proposed development offers a sustainable solution for 7 King Street by converting the upper floors to residential flats, which will help meet the housing needs of Gravesend. The renovation of the building will also contribute to the regeneration of the area, bringing the property back to a good standard while retaining commercial space on the ground floor.

The proposal is supported by several planning policies that align with Gravesham's housing strategy, promote sustainable development, and ensure the ongoing economic vitality of the area. We trust this statement addresses the concerns regarding the marketing and viability of the existing office space and demonstrates that the proposed development is in line with local planning policy and the broader needs of Gravesend.