INDIGO ARCHITECTS

Planning Statement

Proposed Change of Use of an Existing Office Building to Cafe at
The Hollies, Bridge Street, Belper, DE56 1BA

October 2026
0697-202610-CBS-PS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application to Amber Valley Borough Council for the change of use of an existing ancillary office building at The Hollies, 105 Bridge Street, Belper, to provide a small café within Use Class E(b), together with associated outdoor seating.

1.2 The proposed development seeks to establish a modest daytime café serving hot drinks, cakes, sandwiches and light refreshments to local residents, employees, visitors and users of the existing commercial premises.

1.3 The proposal represents the beneficial reuse of an existing commercial building within an established mixed-use development. No significant extensions or alterations to the scale or massing of the building are proposed.

1.4 This statement considers the principle of development, relevant planning policy, planning history, economic and community benefits, neighbouring amenity, access, parking and other material planning considerations.

1.5 The site lies within a conservation area. Heritage considerations will be addressed separately within an accompanying Heritage Statement.

2.0 THE SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

2.1 The application site forms part of The Hollies, a former library building and associated outbuildings situated on Bridge Street, Belper.

2.2 The wider premises accommodate a mixture of residential and commercial activities, including office and wellbeing-related uses, following the redevelopment authorised under planning permission AVA/2021/0921.

2.3 The application relates principally to the smaller ancillary building previously approved for office accommodation, identified as Block 2 within the original planning permission.

2.4 The site occupies an accessible position within Belper, close to established residential neighbourhoods, commercial premises, community facilities and public parking.

2.5 The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of commercial, community, leisure and residential uses. Accordingly, the introduction of a small daytime café would be consistent with the established mixed-use character of the locality.

2.6 The proposal would utilise an existing building and associated external areas without requiring significant additional built development.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 On 25 July 2022, Amber Valley Borough Council granted planning permission AVA/2021/0921 for the conversion and subdivision of the former library into a dwelling and five Class E commercial units, the conversion of Block 2 into offices, retention of Block 3 as a garage and associated parking and landscaping works.

3.2 The permission established the acceptability of a mixed-use redevelopment incorporating commercial and residential accommodation.

3.3 Condition 5 of the permission restricted the commercial uses to Classes E(c), E(e) and E(g), excluding other uses within Class E.

3.4 As the proposed café would fall within Class E(b), a further planning permission is required notwithstanding that both the existing and proposed uses fall within the wider commercial, business and service use class.

3.5 The original restriction was imposed to safeguard neighbouring residential amenity. The present application therefore provides an opportunity to assess the specific operational characteristics of the proposed café, rather than the wider range of activities potentially permissible under unrestricted Class E use.

3.6 The previous approval is an important material consideration. The Council accepted the principle of commercial occupation, customer and staff access, parking and the coexistence of commercial and residential uses within the site.

3.7 The present proposal does not fundamentally alter the character of that development. It introduces a different commercial activity of limited scale, supported by defined operating hours, customer capacity and management arrangements.

4.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The proposal comprises the change of use of the existing ancillary office building to a small café operating under Use Class E(b).

4.2 The café will principally provide hot drinks, cakes, sandwiches, soups, paninis and similar light refreshments, with takeaway purchases also available.

4.3 Food preparation will be limited, with selected items reheated on site. No full-scale commercial cooking operation is proposed.

4.4 The proposed café will operate with one member of staff—with an additional member of staff during busy times—and a maximum of 25 customers at any one time, inclusive of both indoor and outdoor seating.

4.5 The proposed opening hours are 7:30am to 3:00pm, Monday to Sunday.

4.6 Ancillary outdoor seating will be available seasonally but will not be used before 9:00am. All outdoor seating will cease operation by 3:00pm.

4.7 The external seating will remain under the management of the wider commercial premises. It is not directly connected with the residential dwelling and will not require customers to enter or circulate through residential accommodation.

4.8 The proposals involve limited physical alterations to the existing building, principally associated with the internal arrangement, replacement signage and removal of existing obscured glazing treatments.

4.9 The proposal is further described in the accompanying Operational Statement and architectural drawings.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Statutory framework

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The relevant development plan includes the Amber Valley Borough Local Plan 2022–2040, adopted on 2 March 2026, together with any other applicable adopted development plan documents.

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework, revised in August 2026, is a significant material consideration.

Amber Valley Borough Local Plan

5.4 The adopted Local Plan seeks to support sustainable economic development, the vitality and viability of town centres, the appropriate reuse of existing buildings and the protection of residential amenity.

5.5 Policy SS5, concerning development in town centres, is particularly relevant to the proposal insofar as it supports appropriate commercial activities that contribute to the vitality and viability of established centres.

5.6 The proposed café would contribute to these objectives by providing a small-scale commercial service within an existing building, supporting employment and attracting customers who may also use other businesses and facilities in the locality.

5.7 The proposal would make efficient use of existing accommodation without requiring substantial additional development or infrastructure.

5.8 The development also responds positively to the Local Plan's wider objectives concerning sustainable transport, environmental quality, economic activity and the protection of neighbouring amenity.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.9 The NPPF establishes a positive framework for sustainable development, economic growth and the continued vitality of town centres.

5.10 Policy TC2, *Development in Town Centres*, requires substantial weight to be given to benefits associated with supporting town centre vitality and viability, including diversification of uses and the retention or improvement of access to facilities providing everyday services.

5.11 The proposed café directly contributes to these objectives by providing an accessible daytime facility serving the local community.

5.12 The NPPF also supports sustainable economic activity, effective use of existing buildings and development that can be accommodated without unacceptable effects upon neighbouring occupiers or transport infrastructure.

5.13 The modest scale of the proposed operation, together with its accessible location and defined operational arrangements, is considered consistent with these objectives.

6.0 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

6.1 The principle of commercial occupation of the application building has already been established through planning permission AVA/2021/0921.

6.2 The proposed change of use would retain the building in active commercial use, contributing to the economic sustainability of the wider premises.

6.3 The proposal would introduce a facility serving residents, workers, visitors and customers attending other activities at The Hollies.

6.4 A particularly relevant consideration is the recent loss of an established daytime café immediately to the south of the application site.

6.5 Dot-teas Emporium previously operated from 99–101 Bridge Street, providing a daytime café and informal community meeting facility. That business ceased operating during 2025, and the premises are now occupied by the Yak & Yeti Nepalese and Indian restaurant.

6.6 Whilst the restaurant represents a positive addition to Belper's hospitality offering, its principal operation is during evening hours. Consequently, the previous daytime café facility has not been replaced on a like-for-like basis.

6.7 The proposed Shine Café would therefore help restore a recently lost daytime amenity in this particular part of Belper.

6.8 The proposal would contribute to the diversity of local services, provide opportunities for informal social interaction and support the continued attractiveness of the area to residents and visitors.

6.9 These benefits are particularly relevant to the objectives of NPPF Policy TC2, which places substantial weight on the provision and retention of facilities meeting everyday community needs.

6.10 The proposal would also support the viability of the existing mixed-use development, creating opportunities for linked visits between the café, offices and wellbeing activities already accommodated at The Hollies.

6.11 It is therefore considered that the principle of development is strongly supported by the established planning history, the sustainable location of the site and the wider economic and community benefits.

7.0 RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

7.1 The protection of neighbouring residential amenity is an important consideration, particularly given the restriction imposed under Condition 5 of the previous planning permission.

7.2 The proposed café differs from potentially more intensive food and drink operations by virtue of its limited customer capacity, modest staffing arrangements, restricted food preparation and daytime opening hours.

7.3 The café would accommodate no more than 25 customers at any one time, including customers using the external seating.

7.4 The operation would cease at 3:00pm daily, avoiding evening and late-night activity.

7.5 The proposed outdoor seating would not be available until 9:00am, thereby protecting the quieter early morning period from external customer activity.

7.6 No amplified music or external entertainment is proposed.

7.7 Potential noise sources would principally comprise normal customer conversation, incidental furniture movement and the preparation and serving of refreshments.

7.8 The operator will manage customer activity, deliveries, waste handling and closing procedures to minimise disturbance to neighbouring occupiers.

7.9 The external seating is associated with the commercial premises and has no direct connection with the residential dwelling within the wider development.

7.10 The operational restrictions provide a reasonable and proportionate means of controlling potential amenity impacts.

7.11 It is therefore considered that the proposed café would be capable of operating without unacceptable effects upon neighbouring residential amenity.

8.0 OUTDOOR SEATING

8.1 The application includes a modest area of seasonal outdoor seating within the established grounds of The Hollies, as identified on drawing 0697-3-08-00-P1.

8.2 The seating would provide supplementary customer accommodation and would remain ancillary to the principal café use.

8.3 The total number of customers accommodated across the café, including the outdoor seating, would not exceed 25 at any one time.

8.4 The external seating would be available only between 9:00am and 3:00pm, seven days a week.

8.5 These arrangements ensure that the provision of outdoor seating would not materially increase the overall intensity of the proposed commercial operation.

8.6 The seating area would remain under the management of the wider commercial site and would be physically and operationally separate from the residential dwelling.

8.7 Furniture would be modest in scale and arranged to maintain appropriate pedestrian circulation, access to adjoining premises and the continued operation of existing parking areas.

8.8 No external amplified music, entertainment or other activities likely to generate significant disturbance are proposed.

8.9 The outdoor seating would provide an attractive additional facility for customers during suitable weather conditions, contributing positively to the café's commercial viability and the amenity of the wider site.

8.10 The limited scale of the seating, restricted hours and management arrangements would ensure that its use remains compatible with the established mixed-use character of the premises.

8.11 Accordingly, the proposed outdoor seating is considered acceptable in planning terms and would not result in unacceptable effects upon neighbouring amenity, access or the functioning of the wider development.

9.0 ACCESS, PARKING AND HIGHWAY SAFETY

9.1 The application site benefits from established access arrangements associated with the existing mixed-use development.

9.2 The proposed café would utilise these arrangements without requiring a new vehicular access or significant changes to the existing highway infrastructure.

9.3 One existing parking space is allocated for staff use.

9.4 Public parking is available nearby, while the site's location also provides opportunities for customers to arrive on foot, by bicycle or using public transport.

9.5 The café is expected to attract a proportion of customers already visiting other facilities within The Hollies or undertaking journeys to the surrounding area.

9.6 Such linked trips would help limit the extent to which the proposal generates entirely new vehicle movements.

9.7 The maximum customer capacity of 25 people, along with the core single-member staffing arrangement (supplemented by a second member of staff during busy times), further constrains the potential intensity of traffic generation.

9.8 The outdoor seating does not represent additional customer capacity beyond that already assessed for the café.

9.9 The previous planning permission established the acceptability of commercial activities within the wider site, including associated staff, visitor and customer parking arrangements.

9.10 Having regard to the modest scale of the proposal, the established access arrangements and the sustainable location, the development is not expected to result in unacceptable highway safety impacts or severe residual cumulative impacts upon the road network.

10.0 FOOD PREPARATION, ODOUR AND WASTE

10.1 The proposed café will principally serve drinks, cakes, sandwiches and light refreshments.

10.2 Selected food items, including soups and paninis, may be reheated on site. No full-scale commercial cooking operation is proposed.

10.3 The limited nature of food preparation substantially reduces the potential for significant cooking odours and associated extraction requirements when compared with a conventional restaurant or hot-food takeaway.

10.4 Any ventilation or extraction equipment will be selected to reflect the proposed operation and will be subject to any necessary planning or heritage consents.

10.5 Waste will be stored in appropriate receptacles and collected through suitable commercial waste arrangements.

10.6 The operator will ensure that waste storage, deliveries and collection activities are managed to avoid unacceptable noise, odour, litter or obstruction.

10.7 The arrangements are considered capable of ensuring that the café operates without unacceptable environmental effects.

11.0 DESIGN AND PHYSICAL ALTERATIONS

11.1 The proposed development principally involves the reuse and internal adaptation of an existing building.

11.2 No substantial extensions or changes to the building's overall scale and massing are proposed.

11.3 The external alterations are limited in nature, including replacement signage and removal of existing obscured glazing film.

11.4 The proposed approach would retain the established built form and avoid unnecessary new development within the site.

11.5 The site lies within a conservation area and any implications for its special architectural or historic interest will be addressed within a separate Heritage Statement.

11.6 Subject to that detailed assessment, the limited physical nature of the proposal is a positive consideration in the overall planning balance.

12.0 PLANNING BALANCE

12.1 The application seeks permission for a modest change of use within an existing commercial building forming part of an established mixed-use development.

12.2 The proposal benefits from a number of positive planning considerations:

12.2.1 The principle of commercial occupation of the building is established.

12.2.2 The development makes efficient use of existing accommodation.

12.2.3 The café would provide an accessible daytime facility for residents, workers and visitors.

12.2.4 The proposal would help restore a daytime café amenity lost from the immediately adjoining premises in 2025.

12.2.5 The development would support the viability and diversity of commercial activities at The Hollies.

12.2.6 Customer capacity would be restricted to 25 people, inclusive of outdoor seating.

12.2.7 Operating hours would be limited to 7:30am–3:00pm, with outdoor seating restricted to 9:00am–3:00pm.

12.2.8 Existing access and parking arrangements would be retained.

12.2.9 No significant physical enlargement of the existing building is proposed.

12.3 The principal potential adverse impacts concern residential amenity, noise, parking and customer activity.

12.4 These matters have been considered within the application and can be satisfactorily addressed through the limited scale of the operation, the management arrangements described in the accompanying Operational Statement and, where necessary, proportionate planning conditions.

12.5 The proposal would deliver identifiable economic and community benefits without introducing a materially intensive or incompatible use.

12.6 Substantial weight should therefore be afforded to its contribution towards the provision of everyday local services and the vitality and viability of the surrounding commercial area, consistent with NPPF Policy TC2.

13.0 CONCLUSION

13.1 The proposed change of use of the existing office building at The Hollies to a small café represents an appropriate and sustainable form of development.

13.2 The proposal would retain an existing building in productive commercial use, contribute to the diversity of local services and provide a valuable daytime amenity for the Belper community.

13.3 The recent closure of Dot-teas Emporium immediately to the south reinforces the benefits of introducing a replacement daytime café facility in this location.

13.4 The scale and operational characteristics of the proposal have been carefully considered to ensure compatibility with the established mixed-use premises and neighbouring properties.

13.5 The restricted customer capacity, daytime opening hours, delayed commencement of outdoor seating and proposed management arrangements would provide appropriate safeguards against unacceptable impacts.

13.6 The development is considered to accord with the overarching objectives of the adopted Amber Valley Borough Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly those supporting sustainable economic development, town centre vitality and access to everyday community facilities.

13.7 It is therefore respectfully requested that Amber Valley Borough Council grant planning permission for the proposed development, subject to such reasonable and proportionate conditions as may be necessary.

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