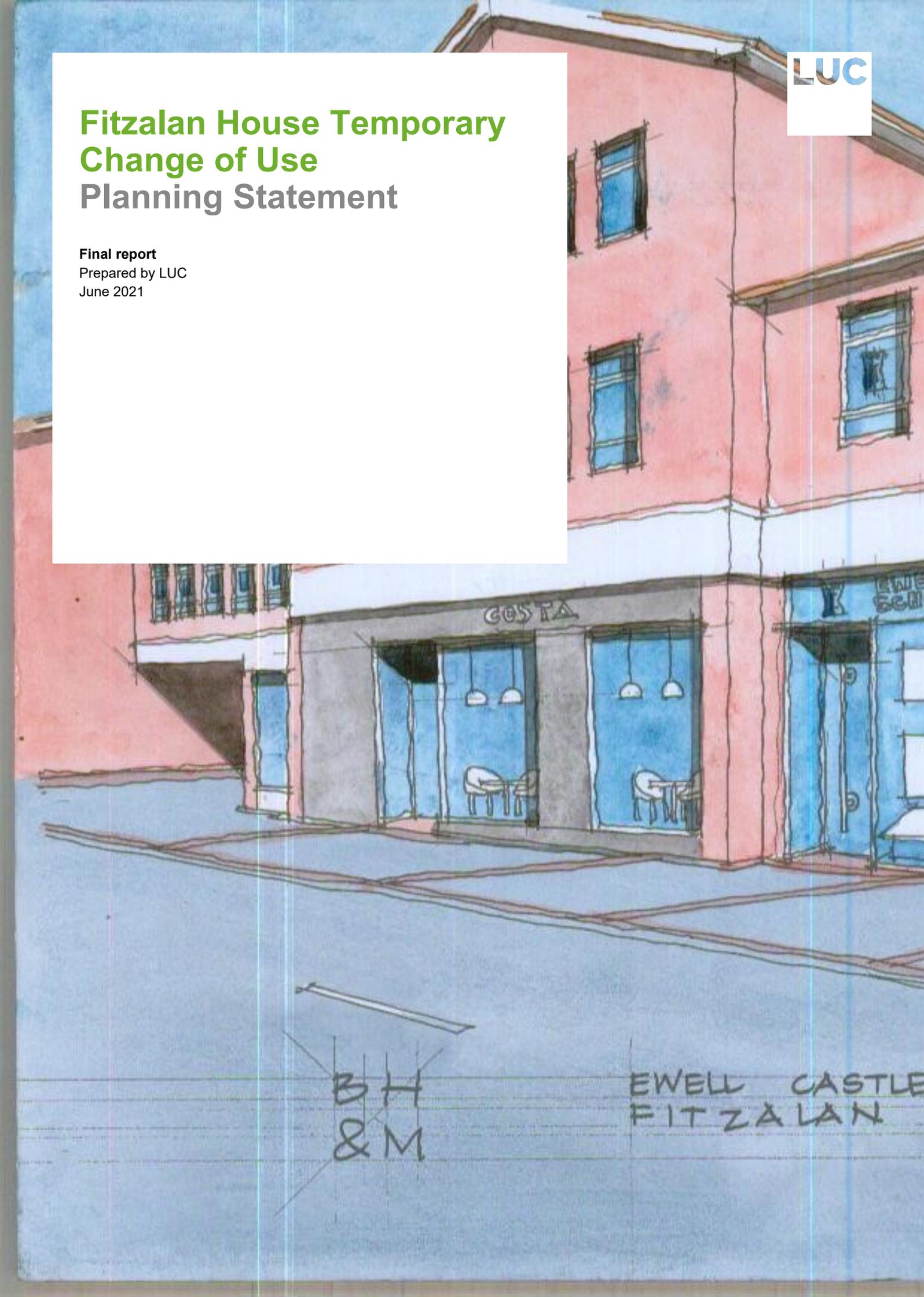


Fitzalan House Temporary Change of Use Planning Statement

Final report

Prepared by LUC

June 2021



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& M

EWELL CASTLE
FITZALAN

Fitzalan House Temporary Change of Use Planning Statement

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Application Submission

1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies an application for planning permission for the temporary change of use from Class E(a) (retail) and E(g) (office) to F1(a) (education) at Fitzalan House.

The Proposed Change of Use

1.2 Ewell Castle School is seeking planning permission for temporary change of use over a 5-year period to use both the first and ground floor accommodation at Fitzalan House for education use, for both teaching (6th form) and administration. The lease term will be 5 years from September 2021.

1.3 During the first year the first-floor space would be used for administration purposes only and the ground floor for marketing. Up to 15 existing members of staff will be in occupation. Going forward up to 60 sixth form pupils will be educated in the building in small group lessons, a '6th Form Hub' in addition to support staff. Pupils would walk between the main school and Fitzalan House, which is a 3 to 4 minute walk (0.3 miles).

1.4 Ewell Castle School will undertake a 'light' refurbishment prior to occupation in September 2021. Structural alterations (i.e. a new staircase) will not be considered until July 2022 at the earliest.

Supporting Information

1.5 This Planning Statement outlines the application proposals and provides an assessment of the proposed development in the context of relevant national and local planning policy and other material considerations.

1.6 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying planning drawings submitted as part of the application, as well as the following documents:

Table 1.1: Supporting Information

Document Title	Authors
Planning Statement	LUC
Photographs (Fitzalan House – Proposed alteration works and photos) and illustration (PJ2140A011)	BHM Architects
Site Location Plan (PJ2140S003)	BHM Architects
Site Block Plan	BHM Architects
Existing Ground floor Plan (PJ2140 S001) and Existing First Floor Plan (PJ2140S002) Proposed Plans	BHM Architects
Proposed Ground floor Plan (PJ2140A001 B) and Proposed First floor Plan (PJ2140A002 B)	BHM Architects
Design and Access Statement (A341R001)	BHM Architects

1.7 Existing and proposed elevations and sections drawings have not been provided as neither will change due to the proposed development.

Chapter 2

Background to the Proposal, Site Context and Planning History

Background to the Proposal

2.1 Ewell Castle School is an all-through independent school providing education for children aged 3 to 18. All lessons for Years 7 to 13 (aged 11-18) are currently taught on the Senior School site. The School would like to make better and more efficient use of the existing teaching facilities at the Senior School site by utilising current administrative office spaces, outlined below.

Figure 2.1: Location of Existing Ewell Castle School sites (red) and the proposed development site (blue)



2.2 The shop window will act as a marketing tool for the School and will showcase vibrant displays of local activities at the School. It is intended that the shopfront and signage will show clear links between the School and the community in Ewell Village. The current shop on the ground floor will be divided into two discrete areas:

- Marketing and admissions office area – for visitors during the working week and some Saturdays, by appointment only.
- Conference/seminar room – for meetings and some 6th form seminars.

2.3 The upstairs office above the shop will be comprised of six 6th form seminar rooms, supervised private study and 'break-out' spaces and associated administrative space. The

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first floor offices that are currently adjacent to the toilets have the potential to be sublet for community use.

2.4 The School is seeking planning permission for a 5-year period, rather than a permanent change of use, in order to:

- Assess the potential long-term effects of splitting 6th Form teaching across sites and to monitor educational outcomes, whilst ensuring that pupils have the best values and ethos-driven experience.
- Allow time for the School to re-develop and re-purpose its existing sites, as it seeks to update its own facilities.
- Assess the effectiveness of administrative staff working away from the main Senior School site.
- Create space to re-negotiate existing School leases for the future period 2022 - 2027.

2.5 Overall, Ewell Castle School is seeking to improve its facilities by providing additional space for education facilities through the change of use at Fitzalan House from retail and office space to educational facilities for use by students and staff. It is not proposed to increase the capacity of the school in terms of pupils or staff numbers.

A Demonstrable Need

2.6 The main School is nearing capacity and next year's projected 6th form numbers will exceed the current available space at the school. Ewell Castle School would like to make better use of the existing teaching facilities at the Senior School site by:

- Allowing greater use of the specialist Senior School facilities by the Prep School offering a larger number of smaller, more differentiated, class sizes for lessons in KS3 and KS4.
- Re-developing and re-purposing office spaces, moving away from open plan administrative office arrangements (on the Senior School site) to smaller individual office spaces that facilitate recent changes to the structure of the School's administrative functions.
- Release administrative office spaces on the Senior School site for counselling and emotional support services, in line with the School's outstanding reputation for pupils' wellbeing support.
- Release administrative office spaces on the Senior School site for more small group learning support lessons, in line with the School's outstanding reputation for pupils' learning support needs.

2.7 As 6th formers (KS5) are taught in small class sizes and permitted to go into Ewell Village during their breaks and

lunchtimes, the Senior Leadership Team is confident that some academic sixth form A-level classes could be taught in a "6th Form Hub" in the village. In addition, the site is only a 3 to 4 minutes' walk from the main Senior School and Prep sites.

2.8 Additionally, as administrative staff experienced remote working during lockdown, the School is confident in the ability of its administrative teams to be based at Fitzalan House and feels that existing office spaces at the Castle site could be better used for direct educational provision for existing students, as detailed above.

2.9 Finally, Ewell Castle School is the largest employer in the immediate locality and would like to do its part in contributing to a healthy and vibrant local high street. The school's presence on Ewell High Street would increase footfall for a number of local businesses, through visitors, pupils, staff and parents making additional walking trips through the high street area. Similar to many high streets across the country, Ewell village high street has been struggling in recent times, exacerbated by the Pandemic, with many local businesses forced to close down and becoming vacant. Local residents and business owners are keen to bring the village's high street back to life.

2.10 In addition to adding vitality to the local centre, having a shopfront in Ewell village will present a strong marketing opportunity to showcase the School's recent enhanced and growing reputation and cement its presence further as an established educational community within the broader village community of Ewell.

The Site

2.11 The existing building, Fitzalan House, is currently vacant but is classified as retail on the ground floor and office space on the first floor. Along with the ground and first floors of the building the lease also incorporates 8 car parking spaces located to the back of the building. The site is situated on the High Street (located at 62 and 64 - 66) within the local centre of Ewell. Both the ground and first floors of the building have been vacant for well over a year. More specifically, the retail unit has been vacant since 8th of August 2019.

Chapter 2

Background to the Proposal, Site Context and Planning History

Fitzalan House Temporary Change of Use
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Figure 2.2: Current Photo of Shopfront

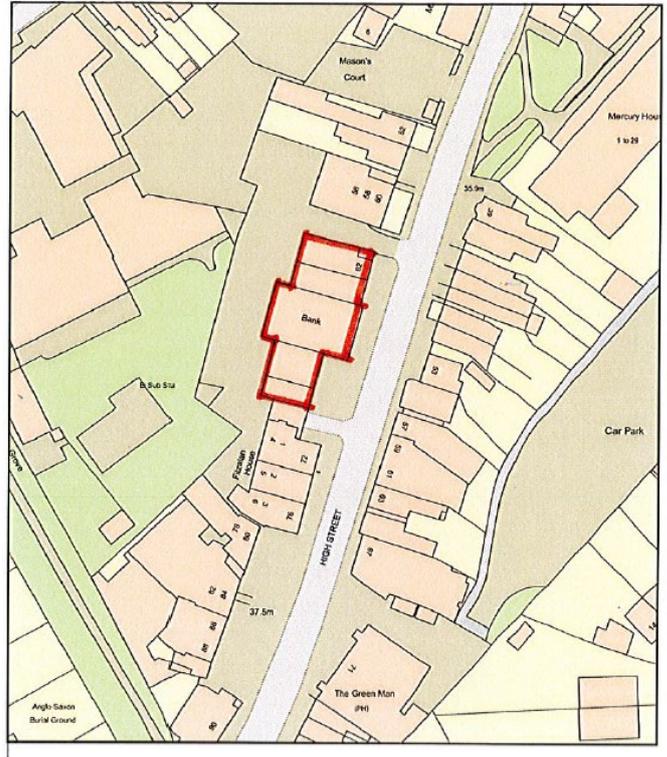


2.12 The site is located in the Ewell Village Conservation Area and within the Ewell Village 'Retail Area'.

Figure 2.3: Aerial Photo of Site Location (Google Maps)



Figure 2.4: Site Location Plan



Relevant Planning History

2.13 The site itself has no relevant planning history, however the following records for other buildings on the High Street are considered pertinent to this application:

- Planning permission was granted on 29 October 2020 (ref: 20/01240/FUL) for the change of use from A1 (shop/office) to Sui Generis (nail bar) at 54 High Street
- Planning permission was granted on 25 February 2020 (ref: 20/00316/COU) for the change of use from A1 (shop) to Sui-Generis (Tattoo parlour) at 9A High Street.

2.14 Notably, the relevant planning officer commented as follows on application 20/01240:

"The A1 uses at this location clearly merit protection. We should look to resist the loss of retail uses where this leads to adverse impacts on vitality, viability and retail function. In this location an active frontage is key. From the planning application form it appears that there are no changes proposed for the external appearance of the shop unit- meaning it will retain its glass frontage and 'retail' appearance. From the description of the proposed use it seems that the use will operate very much like an A1 use with an intention to invite visiting customers. Policy DM28 that states that sui generis may be permitted if there is a strong retail element. This use is

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not considered to threaten the predominance of retail uses in the frontage and have is unlikely to have a negative impact on the vitality of the parade.”

Chapter 3

Planning Policy Context

Overview

3.1 The proposed development has taken account of relevant national and local planning policy. This section of the Planning Statement sets out a brief summary of the relevant planning policy documents and the following section seeks to demonstrate compliance with these policies.

3.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of *The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004)*, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.3 The application site includes the following designations:

- Within Ewell Village Conservation Area
- Within Ewell Village 'Retail Area'

3.4 The development plan for the proposed development comprises of the following:

Adopted Local Policy

3.5 Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Core Strategy (2007): This provides a strategy for Epsom and Ewell up to 2022.

3.6 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Development Management Policies Document (2015): This document supports the objectives and delivers the vision of the Core Strategy.

Other Material Considerations

3.7 Other material considerations including the following:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (2019):** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans can be produced.
- **Planning Practice Guidance:** The Planning Practice Guidance is a web-based resource created by DCLG and launched in March 2014.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance:** The Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide

greater detail on policies to support decisions on planning applications. Relevant SPDs include:

- Shopfront Design Guide (2012)

National Planning Policy

3.8 The latest NPPF was published in February 2019 and constitutes guidance for local planning authorities (LPAs) as a material consideration in determining planning applications. It follows a principle-based system and reinforces the Government's commitment to a plan-led system where LPAs should approve development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without unnecessary delay.

3.9 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development that should run through both plan-making and decision-taking. In assessing and determining development proposals, LPAs should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Planning Practice Guidance

3.10 The national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) documents, published between March 2014 and December 2020 add further context to the NPPF and it is intended that the documents should be read together. LPAs must have regard to advice contained within the guidance, which is also a material consideration when taking decisions on planning applications.

Local Planning Policy

3.11 The Local Plan for the Borough of Epsom and Ewell consists of the Core Strategy (2007) and Development Management Policies Document (2015).

3.12 Key local policies which are relevant to this proposal include:

- Policy CS5: Built Environment.
- Policy CS13: Community, Cultural and Built Sports Facilities
- Policy CS15: Role of local centres.
- Policy DM8: Heritage Assets.
- Policy DM9: Townscape Character and Local Distinctiveness
- Policy DM14: Shopfront Design
- Policy DM28: Existing Retail Centres (Outside of Epsom Town Centre)
- Policy DM34: New Social Infrastructure

Ewell Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (2009)

3.13 This document provides information about the Ewell Village Conservation Area and guidance on future actions to maintain the special character of the area.

Chapter 4

Planning Policy Appraisal

Education

Relevant Policy

4.1 Paragraph 94 of the NPPF states that *'It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive, and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and work with schools promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.'*

4.2 Core Strategy Policy CS 13: Community, Cultural and Built Sports Facilities states that the provision of new community, cultural and built sports facilities, and the upgrading of those existing, will be encouraged, particularly where they address a deficiency in current provision, and where they meet the identified needs of communities both within the Borough and beyond.

4.3 Development Management Policies Document Policy DM 34 New Social Infrastructure states that planning permission will be given for new or extensions to existing social infrastructure on the basis that it meets an identified need; it is delivered in multi-use, flexible and adaptable buildings or co-located with other social infrastructure uses which encourage dual use and increase public access; is in a location that is accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; is of high quality design providing access for all; does not have an adverse impact on residential character and amenity.

Appraisal

4.4 As mentioned above, the main School is nearing capacity and next year's projected 6th form numbers will exceed the current available space at the school. As such, Ewell Castle School would like to make better use of the existing teaching facilities at the Senior School site. Temporary change of use of Fitzalan House will allow the School to assess the potential viability of a '6th Form teaching hub' for the long-term. Additionally, the proposed development will give the School time to re-purpose the existing School

sites to better serve the pupils and staff. The proposed shopfront will be of a high-quality design to showcase the School's recent enhanced and growing reputation and cement its presence further as an established educational community within the broader village community of Ewell.

4.5 Furthermore, there is potential for a portion of the site to be rented out to the community for various uses. Fitzalan House is well located in the centre of Ewell village making it easily accessible and as minimal works are proposed it is unlikely to affect residential character and amenity through construction or the increase in traffic.

4.6 Given the above, the proposed development would be considered to be in accordance with the relevant national and local planning policies.

Historic Environment

Relevant Policy

4.7 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the key piece of national legislation relating to the protection and treatment of the historic environment within the development process. Section 72 states that, in considering applications affecting conservation areas, "*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*".

4.8 Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that '*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*'

4.9 Paragraph 201 of the NPPF says that '*not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.*'

4.10 Core Strategy Policy CS 5: Built Environment states that the Council aims to protect and seeks to enhance the Borough's heritage assets including Conservation Areas. The settings of these assets should be protected and enhanced.

4.11 Development Management Policies Document Policy DM 8 Heritage Assets aims to resist the loss of any Heritage Assets and states that new development should take every opportunity to conserve and enhance them.

4.12 Development Management Policies Document Policy DM 9: Townscape Character and Local Distinctiveness seeks enhancement of the townscape through new development. Planning permission will be granted for proposals which make a positive contribution to the Borough's visual character and appearance.

Appraisal

4.13 While the Fitzalan House lies within the Ewell Village Conservation Area, the building itself is not a listed building and does not have any special qualities or character. The Ewell Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal (2009) states that "Nos. 56-88 are all post 1960s and of no merit – big, blocky and set back". In addition, as the proposal is for a temporary change of use it is unlikely to cause any harm to its surroundings. As such, the temporary change of use from retail and office space to educational uses is not likely to adversely affect the Conservation Area or any heritage assets within close proximity to the site.

4.14 The external signage will be of high quality and not dominant or garish colours which aligns with the recommendations of the Ewell Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal (2009). Additionally, the Ewell Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposal (2009) highlights the need for improvements to the quality of shopfronts within Ewell Village Centre. As the building is currently vacant, the proposed development will bring an active use to it and prevent its deterioration. The buildings active use will increase activity along the High Street helping to maintain its character.

4.15 Given the above, the proposed development would be considered to be in accordance with the relevant national and local planning policies.

Economy

Relevant policy

4.16 The NPPF aims to achieve sustainable development through three overarching objectives including, but not limited to an economic objective which aims to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy.

4.17 Core Strategy Policy CS 15 Role of Local Centres states that measures to protect the role, function and needs of the local centres will be encouraged. The Council will resist proposals which are likely to damage or undermine the retail

function of these centres or detract from their vitality and viability.

4.18 Development Management Policies Document Policy DM 14: Shopfront Design states that applications for replacement shopfronts will be determined having regard to: the architectural merit of the existing shopfront, character of the area, suitability of materials used, suitability of the elements to which the display of advertisements are to be fixed and the suitability of any advertisements with regard to lettering, colour form of illumination and materials in relation to the overall appearance of the building.

4.19 Development Management Policies Document Policy DM 28: Existing Retail Centres (Outside of Epsom Town Centre) states that the existing retail centres will be protected by retaining existing shopping frontages in the Shopping Centres (as identified in the Site Allocations Policies Document and on the Proposals Map) predominantly for retail use, so that they continue to provide locally accessible goods and services and employment opportunities of a suitable scale for the size of the centre and or catchment area and supporting local shops and resisting their loss (particularly convenience shops) in Local Centres. In addition, it notes that the overall percentage of A1 retail uses across the centre should not fall below 50%.

Appraisal

4.20 The site is located within the Ewell Village 'Retail Area', which is an area in which the council expects to see a concentration of convenience, comparison and service retail shops. This is indicated under Policy DM28 (Development Management Policies Document) and Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy. Policy CS15 sets out that measures to protect the role, functions and needs of the local centres will be encouraged.

4.21 Currently, the shop is vacant and has been since 2019. As such, the proposed development will improve vitality of the local centre through an interactive window design. The shop window will act as a marketing tool for the School and will showcase vibrant displays of local activities at the School. It is intended that the shopfront and signage will show clear links between the School and the community in Ewell Village. Although the overall percentage of retail use in Ewell Village is 51.8%, close to the minimum of 50%, supporting paragraph 5.37 of Policy DM28 (Development Management Policies Document) sets out that it is recognised that where units have been vacant for long periods, it may be better for the overall vitality and viability of that centre to bring them into an appropriate use which this proposal would do.

4.22 Additionally, as stated above, the presence of the school on Ewell High Street would increase footfall for a number of local businesses, through visitors, pupils, staff and parents

making additional trips through the high street area. Similar to many high streets across the country, Ewell Village High Street has been struggling in recent years, exacerbated by the Pandemic, with many local businesses forced to close down and premises becoming vacant, like Fitzalan House. Along with local residents and business owners, the School is hoping to bring vitality and vibrancy back to the high street.

Figure 4.1: Shopfront Illustration



4.23 Given the above, the proposed development would be considered to be in accordance with the relevant national and local planning policies.

Transport & Highways

Relevant policy

4.24 Development Management Policies Document Policy DM 35: Transport and New Development states the impact of new development on the transport network will be assessed against other plan policies and transport standards.

Appraisal

4.25 The proposed development is for the purpose of improving the school facilities for existing staff and pupils. It is not proposed to increase the numbers of staff or pupils as a result of the proposed development. Additionally, 6th Form pupils will walk between school sites as it is a 3 to 4 minute walk from the Senior School site. The eight parking spaces on site will be used by the existing School staff. It is therefore considered that the proposed development will not have any adverse impact on transport or the local highway network.

Sustainability and Accessibility

Relevant policy

4.26 Core Strategy Policy CS 6 Sustainability in new developments states that the Council will expect proposals to demonstrate how sustainable construction and design can be incorporated to improve the energy efficiency of development - both new build and conversion.

Appraisal

4.27 As this proposal is for temporary change of use, the School is not anticipating much construction, however, the proposed ground floor reception area, offices and seminar room will be fully accessible, and a new accessible toilet will be fitted on this level. The seminar room on the ground floor will ensure that disabled pupils are able to access lessons. In addition, in the longer term, a new staircase designed for ambulant disabled people, in the current retail unit, will connect to the first floor classrooms and offices.

4.28 LED lights will also be installed throughout the building to be more energy efficient. The proposed ground and first floors will be heated by existing radiators and ventilation will be provided from openable windows.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Planning permission is sought for:

- Change of use from Use Class E(a) (retail) and E(g) (office) to F1(a) (education) on a temporary basis of 5 years.

5.2 Ewell Castle School is seeking to improve its facilities by providing additional space for education facilities through the temporary change of use at Fitzalan House from retail and office space to educational facilities for use by students and staff. The proposed development will contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of the High Street within Ewell village as the building is currently vacant and has been since 2019. The staff, pupils and visitors will increase footfall throughout Ewell Village. It is not proposed to increase the capacity of the school in terms of pupils or staff numbers, but rather to allow the School to rationalise and re-purpose the Senior School site. The proposed development does not therefore seek to change or intensify the existing use of the school in any way.

5.3 This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted plans.