

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

SITE ADDRESS:
Smith's Workshop
Chirnside
Duns

APPLICANT:
Bavs

DATE:
April 2024

Introduction

This statement is in support of a planning application for a change of use of an existing workshop building to a mixed-use of workshop and retail.

The purpose of the statement is to provide a document which sets out a supporting case for the change of use.

Bavs History

Bavs (formerly the Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service) is a charity with a focus on providing reuse and Volunteering opportunities in Berwickshire. They currently operate three town-centre 'charity' shops in Eyemouth, Coldstream & Duns. Bavs was originally an independent voluntary organisation that was set up in 1971 that provided support to the third sector and community groups.

Building Context and History



The Smith's Workshop building is an existing post-war single storey structure that has had a number of uses, its most significant recent use being part of the Lloyds Tractor Group's operations on the site in the late 20th century.

Since Lloyds vacated the site and other existing buildings in the vicinity were demolished, the Smith's building has been refurbished and offered for rent by the owner, however, rental demand from the industrial sector has been poor, and the building is currently vacant.

The site has an existing access from the public road which has previously accommodated industrial or business use levels of traffic movement.

There is a large existing hard-standing parking area in front of the building.

Proposal

Bavs proposes the transformation of the current workshop into a mixed-use space combining workshop and retail functions. The vision for the property is to establish the 'Berwickshire Reuse Hub', a dynamic community space dedicated to upcycling used furniture, fostering skill development, and promoting sustainability within the Berwickshire region.

The Berwickshire Reuse Hub will foster community engagement and skill development by serving as a platform for individuals to learn new skills such as furniture restoration, textile work, and upcycling techniques. Collaborating with third-sector organizations like ReTweed, Allanbank Arts and the Hubs Makers, the aim is to host diverse skill development sessions, empowering members of the community to acquire valuable skills and knowledge.

The Hub will also foster social inclusion and support through partnerships with Scottish Borders Council's No One Left Behind program, it will provide a safe space for at-risk groups to develop employability skills and receive support. Additionally, the hub will offer volunteering opportunities, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion.

The Hub will promote sustainability and reduce negative environmental impact by upcycling and repurposing furniture, it will also contribute to reducing waste and promoting a circular economy. Collaborating with Berwickshire Housing Association, the aim is to provide furniture to individuals in need, thereby addressing financial hardship and promoting social equity.

The Hub will provide a number of community benefits, such as -

Skill Enhancement and Empowerment:

The Berwickshire Reuse Hub will provide a platform for individuals to learn practical skills, enhancing employability and fostering personal development. By offering accredited courses and volunteering opportunities, the aim is to empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to society.

Environmental Sustainability:

Through its initiatives, the Hub will reduce environmental impact and promote sustainable living practices. They will work with Scottish Borders Council's waste department to encourage the reuse and recycling of items that would otherwise be treated as waste. The Hub's emphasis on upcycling and recycling aligns with community values of environmental stewardship, encouraging residents to adopt more sustainable consumption habits.

Social Inclusion:

The Berwickshire Reuse Hub will serve as a gathering place for individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering social connections and reducing social isolation. By providing

support to at-risk groups and promoting inclusivity, the Hub will contribute to building a more resilient and cohesive community.

The Hub will initially have 4 paid members of staff and will endeavour to create volunteering opportunities for a minimum of 20 people. The aim is to maximise the use of the workshop and this will be achieved by offering community sessions, subsidised through funding or by Bavs, and paid-for workshops offering teaching skills. It is anticipated that this will initially attract approximately 1040 persons per annum and will increase year on year.

The Berwickshire Reuse Hub represents a unique opportunity to transform an underutilised property into a vibrant community asset. Through the focus on skill development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, the aim is to create a space where individuals can learn, connect, and contribute to building a stronger, more resilient community.

Bavs invites support and collaboration from stakeholders to realise the Hub vision and make a positive impact on the Berwickshire region.

Conclusion

Although the area containing the site is zoned as 'business and industrial safeguarding' in the local plan, it is hoped that the Planning Authority will consider that the proposed use does substantially depart from that description and is therefore able to support the application.

The proposal will revitalise a disused building for the benefit of the local community and wider public in the area.