

Development Management  
Cheltenham Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Promenade  
Cheltenham  
GL50 9SA

02 May 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

**Ref: 1 Naunton Parade Cheltenham - Proposed change of use from dog grooming salon (sui generis use) to retail (E(a) use class)**

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The application on behalf of charity, Goals Beyond Grass (GBG), seeks permission for the change of use of 1 Naunton Parade, a small unit off Bath Road shopping centre, from dog grooming salon (sui generis use) to retail use (E(a)) to facilitate the establishment of a charity outlet focusing on the sale of pre-owned baby/children's equipment and goods.

It is understood that the existing dog grooming business which was established following the grant of planning permission in December 2013 is relocating to a larger site in Hatherley.

The loss of the unit from employment use as offices (B1) was considered at the time of the 2013 planning application 13/01905/COU. From the planning officer's report, it was considered that the small size of the unit and its poor layout limited the attractiveness of the unit to potential B1 business users. The cleaning business which occupied the unit prior to its change of use to dog grooming salon employed only one person and the Local Planning Authority considered there was little prospect of the building being occupied as a B1 use in the long term.

A change of use was granted but, as it stands, the building can only be occupied as a dog grooming salon and there seems little prospect of an identical business moving into the space, particularly in the current market, against a backdrop of a cost of living crisis and high energy costs.

This same crisis has had a considerable impact on the charity sector. Charities are having to develop new ways of raising funds to maintain their charitable work. GBG, a Gloucestershire charity which focuses on delivering inclusive sports and activities to disables people is no exception.

The proposed business is a new enterprise for the charity. The charity has been seeking suitable premises for a while but has found rental prices high and units too large for their needs and budget. The Naunton Parade unit offers an ideal opportunity for GBG to 'test the water' and create a small outlet with limited financial risk to the charity. The purpose of the new business would be to raise funds for the charity through the sale of pre-owned/second-hand baby and children's goods and equipment. The fact that Bath Road has a number of established charity shops also favours the proposed use. Only one charity shop on the Bath Road currently accepts and retails children's clothes. The focus on baby/children's goods and equipment would complement rather than compete with the existing charity shops and what they offer.

The current cost of living crisis effects many families with babies/young children. The charity outlet would ease the burden in these tough times by providing an opportunity to buy equipment like prams, cots, pushchairs, play and day-to-day equipment, which would otherwise be costly if purchased new. There would be sales of baby and children's clothing, which is more typically donated, alongside these larger items but such sales would be limited given the limited space available at the unit.

The business would not require a shop front or any changes to the exterior of the building. Items for sale would be promoted via the GBG website and Facebook pages and available to purchase online or direct from the unit. Purchases made online would be collected from the unit or from alternative collection points in the area (yet to be determined). The market is predominantly local serving Gloucestershire's communities.

The unit lies on the boundary of the Bath Road District Shopping Centre which provides a wide range of shops and services. It is an established area for shopping which is well-served by public transport, good car and cycle parking facilities and is within walking distance of surrounding residential streets which comprise mainly terraced/semi-detached family homes.

The unit is clearly in a sustainable location being positioned immediately outside of/on the boundary with the District Centre. It is already in a use complementary to the retail function of Bath Road. The charity's use of the building would similarly complement the existing uses on Bath Road and would not adversely affect the vitality, viability or character of the District Centre.

The Bath Road shopping area is a thriving centre with shopping and leisure uses which attract many visitors on a day-to-day basis. Vacant retail units are rarely empty for long periods and, in the last year, a number of new businesses have been established which have served to encourage trade both during the normal retail day and evenings.

Against this background the establishment of a small retail unit for GBG at 1 Naunton Parade would not undermine the retail function of the Bath Road District Centre. Going forward it enhances it by offering a small low-cost unit to individuals/new small companies with start-up enterprises, to explore the viability of their businesses.

The Structure Plan supports sustaining and enhancing existing retail centres. The Local Plan seeks to allow the market to provide additional retail floorspace in sustainable locations where interests of acknowledged importance are not harmed. The Local Plan acknowledges the need to restrict local shopping facilities extending into surrounding residential areas. The unit at 1 Naunton Parade is not in residential use and is already in commercial use. It sits alongside other units (outside of the centre) which are also in commercial use. The use of 1 Naunton Parade as a retail outlet would not in any way harm the retail function of Bath Road or the town centre as a whole. The small scale nature of the operation and its niche market selling pre-owned/second-hand baby and children's equipment are such that its impact would barely be felt in a wider context.

The unit would employ up to 8 part-time staff, offering opportunities for volunteers both young and old. Initially the opening times would be limited to between 10am and 3pm Tuesdays to Saturdays with the potential to extend these to normal retail hours if the demand exists.

It is respectfully requested that the Council supports the application and grants planning permission for the change of use of 1 Naunton Parade. Should you require any further information or should any concerns be raised I would be grateful if you could contact me to discuss.

Yours faithfully

