



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Planning Inspectorate Dismisses Appeal against Decision by Council to Refuse Change of use from Shop or Office to Residential Flat**

EFFINGHAM: THE PLANNING INPECTORATE has dismissed an appeal by a property developer to change the use of a commercial unit in Effingham to a residential flat. Bryden Homes submitted an application for a proposed change of use to the property on Guildford Road from a shop or office to a one-bedroom residential flat in October 2018. The developer appealed the decision after Guildford Borough Council refused permission because of concerns about the loss of a viable retail/office unit in the village.

The inspector agreed with the council that the proposed change of use to the ground floor unit would result in the loss of a viable business and that this ran counter to the 2019 Guildford Borough Local Plan and the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan, which seek to retain employment uses and ensure that local facilities and shops are protected.

The unit forms part of a two-storey building that contains five one-bedroom flats and was built in 2017 on the site of a former windows showroom. The retention of the retail/office unit was an important part of the earlier development, approved by Guildford Borough Council in 2016, to demolish the showroom and erect the building.

Dennis Fernie of Bryden Homes claimed that there was a lack of demand for office use in the village, but planning inspector Paul Wookey noted that marketing had only been undertaken for a four-month period and this “was significantly short of the 12 month period required to provide sufficient evidence as outlined in the council’s policies that it was not viable for the employment use to continue. Further, as there was no marketing of the retail use, it cannot be adequately demonstrated that a comprehensive marketing exercise had been undertaken.” The appeal was dismissed and an application for costs by the council awarded.

Ian Symes, the chairman of Effingham Parish Council, said, “rural villages like Effingham need to protect viable businesses and shop premises from more profitable residential development, so property owners must undertake proper marketing to give commercial units the best chance of continued commercial use.

“Effingham is an attractive area for business and so long as people know that premises are available, then tenants can be found. This particular unit would attract passing trade to a retail business or could provide useful office space. We are delighted that GBC has supported us in this matter and

Jon Short ~ Clerk

The Parish Room, 3 Home Barn Court, The Street, Effingham, Surrey KT24 5LG  
Tel / Fax 01372 454911 clerk2010@effinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

that the inspector has ratified their decision. The award of costs against the developer must be a strong signal to all developers.”



**The shop/office unit on Guildford Road**

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For further information, contact:

Jon Short Parish Clerk & RFO  
[Clerk2010@effinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:Clerk2010@effinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk)  
01372.454911