



Friday, 28 January 2022

To whom it may concern,

I would like to respond to some of the queries recently raised through the consultation launched by Churchill Retirement Living on their proposals to redevelop the warehousing and rear portion of the Mann's store in Cranleigh.

Manns of Cranleigh has been trading at 101-105 High Street Cranleigh since 1887 and grew from a small hardware store to the large department store on a site of over an acre. Over the last 20 years retail has been challenged by the increase of on-line shopping and with continually increasing operational costs.

It had become apparent that our store was too large and we had been reducing its trading floor footprint for some time, eventually to a trading area of just c9,000 sq.ft at the front of the site by November 2020 from a total footprint of c.42,000sqft.

At this time, Manns of Cranleigh was struggling financially and entered into a CVA to address its legacy debt, trading became even more of a challenge where upon we were all hit by the pandemic.

Sadly after a concerted effort to keep the store open it became evident in the summer of 2021 that this was simply no longer viable and to mitigate any further losses the Board took the very difficult decision to close the store and I, Mr R Womack who has headed the company for almost 30 years took the decision to retire.

With the closure of the store, the site is therefore now available for redevelopment and it is believed that the proposed sale to CRL for the rear of the site will not only rejuvenate and modernize a sad looking and underutilised portion of the site but also offer a housing scheme with high demand in a perfect location for the targeted demographic.

The front of 'Manns' as it is known and loved by the community is not impacted by these plans and although currently closed, remains a large retail/service opportunity. With a c5,000sq.ft ground floor footprint in what could be argued to be the best location in the high street, the owners have now turned their attention to this area. Although no final decision has been made, options could include, leasing or selling the site in its entirety or sectioning the site into smaller units to attract more than one occupant. The owners of the site are currently in discussion with commercial agents to address this.

It should be noted that the rear of the site has been the target of much development interest over recent years but now with the closure of Manns of Cranleigh the time is right. CRL have designed a sympathetic scheme that looks to fit seamlessly into the space, offering a great location to its new residents whilst bringing life and value to the high street. The Board of Manns of Cranleigh fully support this application which it is hoped will allow us to invest in and revive our High Street premises.

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Yours Sincerely,

*Mr R J Womack*