

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Town Council Premises.

Councillors have resolved that Officers should investigate options for the future location of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council's base, including both the office and the Outside Services Unit. Officers have reviewed available properties within the Town Council's service area that could meet all the Council's needs. One property has been identified that would allow for the consolidation of the two current sites, provide fully accessible Council offices and a Council Chamber, and offer additional office or residential space to let. This additional space could help offset the building's running costs.

A business plan, including a proposed timeline, has been prepared by Officers for Councillors to consider.

Background Papers:

1. Business Plan
2. Quote for Building Condition Survey
3. Property Sales Brochure

Rationale for the recommendation:

- Enables consolidation of the Council's two sites
- The property would be owned rather than rented
- Meets the Council's current and future needs
- Maintains a presence in the town centre
- Offers the opportunity for revenue generation to help with running costs

Recommendation:

That Officers be authorised to commission a Building Condition Survey for the identified property.



Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Relocation of Offices Business Plan

Foreword.

This document has been created to demonstrate the viability of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council purchasing the old Barclays Bank site at 22 Hyde Hill and converting it into a purpose-built unit to house both the office staff and the outside team under one roof.

The Premises.

22 - 24 Hide Hill is a Grade II Listed three storey terraced building towards the centre of the western side of Hide Hill which is believed to date to the late eighteenth century. The building is of traditional construction with painted rendered external finish to the front elevation with painted ashlar quoins under a pitched roof clad in slate. There are decorative cornices over the ground floor window and door openings incorporating fluted scroll brackets to either side. Significant extensions have been erected to the rear. There is a first floor linking corridor to the north of the central section to the wall head to Veitch's yard (the vennel and staired walkway linking Hide Hill to Eastern Lane Car Park. is capped in lead. Ground Floor: Front Shop, most recently subdivided to provide ramped access within lobby with service counter; rear shop divided to provide foreign exchange counter, mortgage adviser desks, interview room and office areas; corridor through to rear office; strong room; stairs to upper levels. Secondary entrance to the south providing access to the main stairs to the upper levels and the basement. First Floor: Landing; front office suite providing general office and two further offices; ladies and gents WCs; storeroom; Thriving Market Town rear linking corridor; general office with three storerooms off; rear stair and fire escape to Eastern Lane Car Park. Second Floor: Front Landing with WC off; Storeroom; boiler room. Rear Stairs to rear office suite providing reception, and three offices.

The property is listed with Edwin Thompson and is on the market for offers over £345,000.



Current Floor Plan.

The current floor plan is a network of former bank offices and storage facilities with several toilets and kitchen facilities, these are outdated and run down and would need fully modernised. The current layout would also need to be rearranged to suit our needs.



FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSES
ONLY. NOT TO SCALE.

We would re-design the floor plan to suit our needs as well as creating office space that can be rented out to generate income to support the cost of running the building. The Council Chamber and a councillor's anti-room/lounge could also be hired as flexible meeting space, again generating income or can be used by community groups at a discount. During this renovation process we can super insulate the building and make it energy efficient and add in renewable energy sources for electricity and heating/hot water as well as rainwater harvesting for use in watering seasonal displays. The building will be fully accessible allowing the public to access meetings easily but also future proofing for any future staff needs.

Proposed Changes.

In discussion with many councillors, it is apparent there is a desire for a more joined drive towards tourist information and residents' services within the town. This new premises would allow for this. The proposed new layout leaves the main part of the original shop frontage useable for the Berwick Visitor Centre, as well as an office for them. Basement storage would also be available. There would be an accessible public toilet which could be made into a "changing spaces" if councillors felt there was a need.

Berwick Town Council would have a secure front desk to protect our staff from the public but allow for an easily accessible council, allowing for residents to come to us and if we cannot help, we can act as a signpost to direct them to who they need.

This layout allows for clear separation between councillors and officers over two floors with council business been conducted on the first floor and officers actioning resolutions on the ground floor.



This proposed layout is only to give an indication of possibilities available. Other options would include combining the councillors lounge with the staff room and then repurposing

the third floor and attics into residential accommodation OR BTC occupying the ground floor and creating residential on the 1st and 2nd floor BUT this would not allow space for a proper visitors' centre.

Confidential primary discussions with members of the Berwick Visitor Centre Board have had a positive reception towards the idea of a combined town centre premises and they would be willing to work with BTC on this.

Current Position.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Currently rents our office/meeting room on Marygate, which the lease runs out in just over two years.

While the Marygate Office is a fantastic tool for making us approachable to the public both residents and visitors alike, it also has several limitations that make working there impractical and would need addressing if we were to extend our lease. These include.

- Inefficient and expensive to run building.
- No segregated front desk.
- No separation of front desk and main meeting room.
- Non accessible upstairs meeting room.
- Limited segregated secure storage.
- No public toilet
- No area for councillors to meet that does not require an officer to be on site.
- No separate staff area for breaks away from desks.

All of these would be resolved with a purpose built properly designed office space.

Financially this move will be more cost effective for the running of the council as we spend a considerable sum in rent and rates which will be better spent on a tangible asset owned by the council that can also generate some income towards its upkeep.

Building	Rent	Rates	Utility	Insurance	Total
Marygate Office	£12,500	£2,650.94	£6,447.24	£5,806.52	£27,404.70
GRAND TOTAL					£27,404.70

The New Building.

The floor plans can be tailored to suite the Council's needs. During the conversion, this would be the ideal opportunity to super insulate the building to reduce running costs and add renewable sources of heating/power (subject to planning). The Flat Roof Structure between the two parts of the building is perfectly located for any external plant required.

Although the procurement cost and predicted conversion cost (full design package needs to be created for this cost to be fixed) make the project total in the region of £800,000. The preferential interest rates and long repayment terms we have access to through the Public Loans Board mean that our annual running costs would stay around the same but would reduce over time as rent prices increase with inflation and the actual value of the pound depreciating. Berwick Town Council would then own an asset.

The options drawn out on the proposed floor plan above allow for office space to be rented out to external bodies. The average rental price for a modern fully serviced office in Berwick is between £110-£150 per square meter per annum not including rates/utilities. The rentable office space is approximately 50m² so could generate an income of between £5,500 to £7,500

The two flexible meeting spaces would be approximately 50m² and 20m². Rooms of this size can easily generate around between £15-£35 per hour. We would build a business model that would achieve a minimum of 3 paid, 1-hour rentals per room, per week, generating approximately £7,500 per annum. Tea and Coffee could be added at a price per head to generate further income on top of the rental.

This gives an Annual Recurring Revenue of £13,000-£15,000 per annum.

Other options would be to add residential accommodation instead of office space. Officers believe you could fit two 1-bedroom apartments onto the 2nd floor. One-bedroom apartments in Berwick generate between £400-£550 per calendar month. This could give a rental income of £9,600 to £13,200 per annum.

If Berwick Town Council was to solely occupy the ground floor and convert the first into accommodation as well, this would allow for a further one-bedroom and a two-bedroom apartment.

Two-bedroom apartments generate between £450-£600 per calendar month.

This could generate a further income of income of £10,200 to £13,800. Giving a potential total rental income of £19,800 to £27,000 per annum.

Project Timeline.

Should councillors wish to proceed a rough timeline is set out below.

- Building Conditions Survey carried out. **June 2025.**
- Design contactor appointed to create full drawings. **July 2025.**
- Redevelopment Work Costed. **July 2025.**
- Project Put Out to Tender. **October 2025.**
- Secure Government Funding. **October 2025.**
- Purchase Building. **August/ September 2025.**
- Redevelopment Begins. **Winter 2025/26.**
- Give notice on Marygate Office **September 2026.**
- Redevelopment Finishes, building handed over. **November 2026.**
- Move over to Hyde Hill from Marygate **December 2026.**

Summary.

Although this would be a significant investment for Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council, it would be money spent on an owned asset rather than rented accommodation that is more cost effective for the taxpayers.

It also makes the staffing of the council more efficient on a day-to-day basis through being on one site and the building been designed and tailored to our needs. It is a prominent location in the heart of Berwicks Shopping District maintaining our accessibility to the public, which has been a major success of the Marygate office.

This project also presents a unique opportunity for us to create a more prominent, accessible visitors centre, that is user friendly and promotes cross organisation work between us at Berwick Town Council and the Visitors Centre, solidifying the tourist information offering within the town.

There is also the potential to create further rental accommodation within the town, helping to ease the housing shortage, whilst preserving the shop frontage of a building withing the principal shopping area.

The project also brings a new lease of life to a building that is part of the fabric of Hyde Hill and helps towards the continued regeneration of Berwicks Town Centre making it a more attractive place to live, stay and visit.

Background Paper 2 – Building Survey Quote.

We will be pleased to inspect the above property and to provide a Level 3 survey report for the fixed fee of £2,890 plus out-of-pocket expenses and VAT (this represents 17 hours at my current standard time-charge of £170, being four hours for the inspection, including travel, and thirteen hours for preparation of the report with photo schedule). We append the actual photo files, so you see exactly what we see. The only expense is a bit of travel, with printing, postage and flash-drive for photos at your option.

We request a 50% deposit in advance of the visit, with the balance payable when the report is in final draft. If we see a potential deal-breaker during the inspection, we will call you in case you wish to abort. The RICS doesn't allow us to use the term 'structural survey' anymore, so I attach a paper telling you what to expect from a Level 3. I also attach our Conditions of Business and an Acceptance Form; please return the signed form to indicate that you have read and understood our terms and wish to commission the works set out above.

Hugh Garratt.

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