PLANNING POLICY COMMENTS

Application Number	**AWDM/0940/13**
Location	**Unit 7, Chartwell Business Centre, Lancing**
Proposal	**Change of Use to Children's Soft Play Centre**
DM Officer	**Peter Barnett**
Sent to Policy	**19th September 2013**
Policy Officer	**Ben Daines**
Returned to DM	**3 October 2013**

Key Issues / Policies

National Planning Policy Framework
The NPPF states that planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose.

Adur Local Plan 1996
The site is located within Lancing Business Park which is subject to policies AE2 and AE4 of the Adur Local Plan which support B1and B2 uses (as well as B8 uses where a development is comprised of a mix of uses). The policy does not support any other uses and is inflexible in this regard.

Revised Draft Adur Local Plan 2013
Although it is accepted that the Draft Plan doesn't have a significant amount of weight at this stage, it should be noted that Policy 25 of the Revised Draft Plan also protects Lancing Business Park for B1, B2 and B8 uses with no flexibility for other uses.

Adur Employment Land Review 2011
This study concludes that the supply of land and premises for employment uses in the district is tight and there is no quantitative case for the release of employment land for other uses. Additionally, the quality of the portfolio of sites has been assessed as sub-standard.

Officer Comments:

Lancing Business Park is one of the largest and most important employment sites in the district. It also has very few vacancies.

I am aware that similar changes of use have taken place within Lancing Business Park, contrary to polices AE2 and AE4 of the Local Plan, and these changes of use are referred to in the marketing report submitted by Michael Jones. However, it

would be of significant concern if such changes of use were viewed as setting a precedent rather than being seen as exceptions, as any accepting of a precedent for non B class uses at Lancing Business Park would be likely to eventually erode its character and purpose.

Unit 7 is part of a recent conversion to provide more modern employment floorspace to meet the modern needs of businesses and therefore should be retained for B class employment uses given the lack of, and desperate need for, modern quality premises in the district.

With regards to the NPPF, given that 70% of the units at Chartwell Business Centre are currently occupied, and given the generally low vacancy levels in the Business Park, it would be difficult to argue that 'there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for (employment) purposes.'

The marketing statement submitted by Michael Jones is brief and doesn't show clear evidence of a sustained marketing strategy. Although the unit in question has not been occupied since 2007, this is likely to be a result of the fact that eight new units were put onto the market at the same time and it is unlikely that they would all be filled immediately.

Summary

Given clear policies in the Adur Local Plan 1996, as well as the emerging Adur Local Plan, a policy objection is raised to the application. It is also not considered that a refusal of planning permission would conflict with the NPPF.