Development Management – Delegated Officer Report **Date: 04/09/2025**

Application Number	**AWDM/0665/25**
Address	**Meeting Hall, 1 Birkdale Road, Worthing**
Proposal	**Change of use from children's day care to office and ancillary storage**

Date of site visit: 02/07/25

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Site notice: (wider publicity / conservation area): N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The site comprises approximately 0.05ha, located in a predominantly residential area. It contains a single storey building of 1990s origin built pursuant to planning permission WB/273/90 and extended to the rear in 2011 (**AWDM/0294/11)**. This comprises approx 120sqm. Its most recent use was as a day care facility for children with learning disabilities and prior to this a religious meeting hall.

The proposal is for change of use to an office by an electrical contractors' company. There are no external alterations to the building. The internal space is shown for use of offices, meeting and break out rooms, small stores and WC, with minor internal partitioning of the WC. Externally, existing hardstanding is to be used for parking for staff parking, 4no. spaces are shown but there is space for additional parking in tandem

A detached partially glazed playroom building (approx 28sqm) towards the rear, south-east corner, which may also be used for storage, along with a small shed (4sqm) adjacent to the building entrance. There are margins of external spaces used for children's outdoor play and planting including two small trees at the eastern boundary. 1.8m - 2m close board fences surround the site. These abound neighbouring gardens and a shared passage from Birkdale Road serving 89/91 Durrington Lane. Access is via 2m high timber close-boarded timber gates in Birkdale Road. Boundaries adjoin neighbouring gardens and existing windows on the western boundary are 1m from the side boundary with no 5 Birkdale Road.

Consultations:

WSSC Highways: No Objection / advice

The proposed use is unlikely to result in an increase in traffic utilising the local road network. There are 4 car parking spaces proposed within the site which will be utilised by administration staff. It is likely the business operates a number of vehicles/vans which may have a need to visit the site.

The site is located in a residential area and whilst there is on-street parking available it is likely that there is high demand for spaces at some times of day. The applicant has stated: '*It is anticipated that light commercial vehicles will access the site only for the incidental trips into the office. Parking on the site will serve administrative workers using the office space*.' It is not clear

as to the meaning of ‘ancillary storage’. Does this mean electrical components? Or a warehouse type function?

No objection in principle however there are some concerns over traffic generation in relation to visiting vans. It is appreciated that there may be a need for incidental trips and these should be kept at a minimum.

Environmental Health Officer: No Objection. Are hours of use to be limited?

Representations: Two responses 89 & 93 Durrington Lane

- What is the scope of proposed operations by the applicant's company?
- What is meant by ‘ancillary storage’. it seems to refer to anything from boxes of paper (for the office?) to: “Ancillary services are essential operations that support the transmission of electric power while maintaining the reliability of the grid. If the application is anything like the latter it needs some proper explaining to the inhabitants of the Birkdale Road area.
- Is the applicant purchasing the property?
- Is there to be a collection or delivery to this storage, and if so, how many vehicles and how often? What is low frequency?
- The number of parking spaces can't be approximate 4no. are shown on the plans
- The proposed user does not intend for commercial vehicles of electricians to be parked on site for significant periods ... ‘light commercial vehicles will access the site only for the incidental trips into the office. Parking on the site will serve administrative workers using the office space. No vehicles are proposed to be parked on site overnight". So how many people and what is the provision for parking for all the other users: visiting electricians (light commercial vehicles), salesmen/visitors/customers (if applicable) etc. within the boundary?
- Adequate parking provision must be considered within the boundary so that it doesn't impact on an already difficult parking situation in Birkdale Road.
- Floor Plans' show 6 desk spaces and a meeting room for 8 people. Building capacity was previously limited (65 people when a meeting hall). Any future restriction?
- If there are no vehicles within the boundary overnight, does that mean they will all be parked at the homes of the drivers, or will any vehicles be parked in Birkdale Road overnight?
- Durrington Lane, Birkdale Road and associated streets are busy residential roads with much traffic through the junction and on street parking due to lack of off-street for many houses. Over the years there has been an issue of people parking across, or partially across my drive when visiting/dropping off / collecting causing difficulty for garage no 93 and manoeuvring for no. 91.
- Will new security arrangements, such as alarms gates and lighting be needed and will this impact neighbours

Relevant Planning History

WB/273/90 Construction of Meeting Hall
Approved, subject to use limitation not to include social use and limited to 35 people and provision of parking.

02/00725/FULL (following 99/00352 FULL). Application to remove condition 9 of planning consent WB/273/90 restricting the number of persons occupying the meeting hall.
Approved (limited to 65 people)

AWDM/0294/11 Proposed single storey rear extension and alterations to front elevation including proposed porch. Deletion of condition 7 and 8 of planning permission WB/0273/90 relating to occupancy of the premises. Approved

AWDM/044/14 & 0846/14. Approved the detached playroom building a small shed

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036: Policies DM5**,** DM8, DM10, DM11, DM15, DM19 & DM22
NPPF, 2024

Planning Assessment

Principle of Use

The premises was originally built as a meeting hall used as a place of worship. It was most recently used for several years as a day care facility for children with learning disabilities. This falls within the Local Plan definition of community facilities, which includes community venues, places of worship, education facilities... where evidence demonstrates they have a community value. On this basis, Policy DM8: Planning for Sustainable Communities / Community Facilities of the WLP is engaged, in particular criterion e).

The Covering Letter outlines that the operator of the day care facility (Guild Care) has relocated the facility to another site (Methold House Day Centre) that better meets the needs of their current and intended users. A letter from Guild Care (dated 16th April 2025) has been attached as an appendix as evidence confirming the relocation of the facility to an alternative site.

This is further explained in a further email (11th August) from the agent as follows:

> *The service at Birkdale Road currently supports children with complex disabilities at weekends and during school holidays. The move to relocate this service to Methold House will enable the children to have a much-improved environment. This space is totally designed around their needs as the space will be used only by those with disabilities and adapted to meet their needs, provide opportunities to develop skills, increase independence, promote safe play internally and externally and provide a spacious, bright welcoming space for children to use.*
>
> ***Does their relocation still serve the people served previously at Birkdale Road?***
> *Yes, it is the same cohort of children and their families who will use this space. This service supports children from across the Worthing area and beyond. Families always bring their children to the service. There is better parking and facilities to drop off and collect at Methold House which will make it easier for them.*

> ***Does the new location serve needs, / provide facilities and services equivalent to or better than Birkdale Road?***
> *Facilities and environment at Methold House will be a big improvement on those currently provided at Birkdale Road as the building and space will be specifically adapted to meet the needs of the children who will use it.*

Policy DM8 seeks to safeguard community facilities, and it is clear that the pre-existing children's use is reprovided in a reasonably accessible town centre location. The first part of DM8 (e) is therefore considered to be partially met. However, it is considered relevant that the building would no longer be available to other types of community use and is not physically reprovided. As such consideration has also been given the second part of policy DM8 (e), which is concerned with marketing.
On this point the agent continues:

Marketing for the property commenced on 24th March 2025, with a prominent board erected at the entrance, clearly advertising the space as available for sale. The property was actively promoted through multiple online platforms, including Jacobs Steel's own website as well as Rightmove, Zoopla, and LoopNet. Additionally, targeted exposure was achieved via LinkedIn and Instagram, with listings specifying the guide price as offers in the region of £350,000.

The campaign generated interest, resulting in several enquiries and six property viewings. From these, four formal offers were received from a mix of owner occupiers, investors, and developers. No viewings or offers were made from community organisations. All offers were submitted to Guild Care for consideration on 10th April.

Marketing details have been provided and are still advertised online (3rd September 2025). These reflect the existing use and a range of other community uses which could take place within the existing class of use. The price and freehold terms do not appear to be excessive. Marketing has been via agents which handle non-domestic sales and via national outlets. Since marketing began in March 2025, and although a longer marketing period would be preferable, interest up to August 2025 has been limited, with none from community organisations.

In summary of Policy DM8 (e), it is debatable as to whether each part of the policy is fully met, but each part has been addressed to an extent. An overall balanced view may be taken. Alongside this some weight may be given to the relationship of the site to its residential neighbours and that the change away from a community use may have a degree less of an impact in terms of activity and disturbance. It is important to consider the nature and impacts of the proposed use in order to assess the weight which can be attached to this.

Proposed Use and Impacts

Policy DM10 supports development which provides employment opportunities and policies DM5 & DM22 consider impacts of potential uses and in particular impacts on neighbours such as noise, disturbance, light, fumes or other forms of pollution; unacceptable adverse impacts should be avoided.

The application shows the building to be used for offices and states a total of four employees with the layout showing six desk spaces and meeting spaces. Storage would comprise the outbuilding of 28sqm, (a small internal store in the main building is the same size as the toilet cubicle). The applicant states:

As shown on the proposed layout the use is predominantly office and meeting space with ancillary storage being just a fraction of the floor area. On site is all office staff and the electricians are out on visits all day and then take their vans home with them every day so only visit the site incidentally. They do not need much storage as they take orders and then pick up electrical parts from suppliers on their way to visits so there is little need for much storage on site. The storage that does exist is mostly accumulated over time from job leftovers (cables, wires, nuts, bolts etc.) with some storage of specific items that may get delivered to the office for later pick up by the electricians. Nothing is stored that might have fire or safety implications (no chemicals or hazardous materials etc.).

Aside from the daily arrival and departure of the office-based employees the agent comments that deliveries to the site would be on average two per week via Transit size delivery vans.

As such, the proposed use by this particular applicant appears to be unlikely to generate significant activity. By comparison with the previous use, which included children's outdoor play and an area for this alongside the site boundary, the proposal is considered a degree less likely to give rise to noise and disturbance. The hours of use can be subject of a planning condition (Weekdays 07.00hrs - 18.00hrs, as stated in the application form).

Furthermore, storage is only proposed in the outbuilding, and with no other or external storage so that in terms of scale it remains small in relation to the primary office use of the proposal. Mindful of the concerns of neighbours on this point, a planning condition can ensure that this remains ancillary. The applicant's information as to the nature of items stored, addresses the neighbour's concern regarding hazardous storage. The Environmental Health officer has no objection.

Traffic and Parking

The proposed office use comprises 120sqm gross. Typical employment densities (1 employee per 25sqm) would produce an average of 5 - 6 staff, which is considered relatively modest in scale. The parking availability of 4 fixed spaces has the ability for tandem parking which could accommodate two extra vehicles and waiting space for a delivery vehicle. The site is also located on bus routes and within 0.8 miles of the nearest railway station, as such the parking arrangement is unlikely to lead to off-site pressures due to staff.

It is not possible to prescribe the number of visiting members of staff, as mentioned in neighbour responses. It is relevant that the site has an existing use which involves visits by users and staff. The inherent scale of the premises and proposed hours of use are considered to strike a reasonable balance.

In terms of deliveries, the applicant anticipates on average two per week via Transit size delivery vans. In addition to the on-site storage, electricians employed by the applicant are said to pick up electrical parts from suppliers on their way to visits so there is little need for much storage on site.

Given that this mode of operation could change over time following the grant of planning permission, or other office-based businesses could occupy the premises with a different mode of operation, and in light of the advice of the Highway Authority, it is considered reasonable to require details of management of vehicles and deliveries so that the stated frequency and management of the parking and manoeuvring space can be efficiently undertaken. A condition can be applied. This can also include measures to minimise the risk of obstructions to neighbouring accesses from vehicles associated with the use.

Other matters

There is no proposed change to the building and site boundaries. The applicant has confirmed that space at parts of the boundaries which are currently used for children's play and low grade planting, can be used for additional planting, as indicated in the submitted site plan.

Site security is provided by the existing 2m gates and fence along the frontage. The applicant advises that there is an existing intruder alarm system and a PIR 500w security light. This may be changed and the opportunity to minimise light pollution close to neighbours is relevant. A camera may be required and details can be required, along with any lighting, in order to achieve a balance between security and neighbouring privacy and amenity.

Summary and Planning Balance

In summary the proposal is of modest scale and due to the size of office floorspace and the ancillary storage building for non hazardous storage, is unlikely to generate significant levels of activity. A condition to limit storage to the outbuilding, including no eternal storage, will assist in maintaining this. In pursuance of highway advice a site management plan to manage parking, delivery vehicles (and their anticipated frequency) and manoeuvring space within the site, is also reasonable in minimising the risk of overspill and can include measures to minimise risk of obstruction to neighbouring access in Birkdale Road.

Other future changes within Class E could include retail, creches and sports & training, health services and light industry. Given the proximity of the site to neighbours and potential traffic implications, which may exceed those of the proposed and previous uses, it is considered reasonable to limit planning permission to office and associated ancillary storage only. It is also reasonable to limit Permitted Development additions which apply to this class of use, which might intensify its scale and impact. Permitted Development changes, which could include conversion to a dwelling and loss of non-residential space, which is quite sparse in this area, should also be restricted.

Alongside the applicant’s submissions received in relation to marketing and relocation of the previous community use, it is considered that planning permission on these terms strikes a balance between business needs and management of impacts. It can be supported under policies DM8 and DM11. Subject to these terms, neighbouring amenity considerations, access and parking are also considered to be reasonably met in accordance with policies DM5**,** DM10, DM15 & DM22.

Recommendation: Approval

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? Partially.

Conditions:

1) List of approved drawings [*to be added*]

2) The use hereby permitted shall be implemented before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3) The use hereby approved shall comprise and office with ancillary, no- hazardous storage only and no other use within Class E of the Town And Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987 (As Amended). Storage shall be limited to the existing outbuilding and shed only and there shall be no external storage.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and because other uses in the proximity of neighbouring dwellings and well used highway junction, may have further amenity and traffic impacts which would require further consideration.

4) The office hereby approved shall only be used between the hours of 07:00hrs - 18:00hrs Monday to Friday and not on Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holidays and no deliveries to or from the site shall take place outside these hours.

Reason: For consistency with the terms of the application and to balance the interests of business use with the residential amenities of the area in accordance with policies DM5 and DM22 of the Worthing Local Plan 2020 - 2036 and the NPPF, 2024.

5) Notwithstanding the provisions of Schedule 2 of the Town And Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended, or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order, the building and premises the subject of this permission shall not be used for residential purposes.

Reason: To safeguard the use for employment purposes in accordance with Policy DM11 of the Worthing Local Plan 2020 - 2036 and the NPPF, 2024.

6) Notwithstanding the provisions of Schedule 2 of the Town And Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended, or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order, no enlargement of buildings nor the construction of additional buildings within the curtilage shall be carried out without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Additional development may affect the scale, intensity and impact of the use, in order to safeguard the amenities, the residential amenities of the area in accordance with policies DM5 and DM22 of the Worthing Local Plan 2020 - 2036 and the NPPF, 2024.

7) Prior to the commencement of the use hereby approved, or within three months of the date of this permission, whichever is sooner, the following information shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

i) A site management plan, including the management of parking and deliveries to ensure that there is space for the manoeuvring and waiting of vehicles, including delivery vehicles and to minimise their impact upon the nearby highway, neighbouring access and amenities, and

ii) Any measures required for site security, such as lighting and CCTV cameras (if required), including details to minimise their visual intrusion, light pollution and impact on neighbouring privacy.

These details thereby approved shall be permanently adhered to unless any variation is

…/contd

first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of clarity, highway safety and residential amenities, in accordance with Policies DM5, DM15 and DM22 of the Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036 and NPPF, 2024.

Case Officer: Stephen Cantwell Date: 4th September 2025

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 5 September 2025