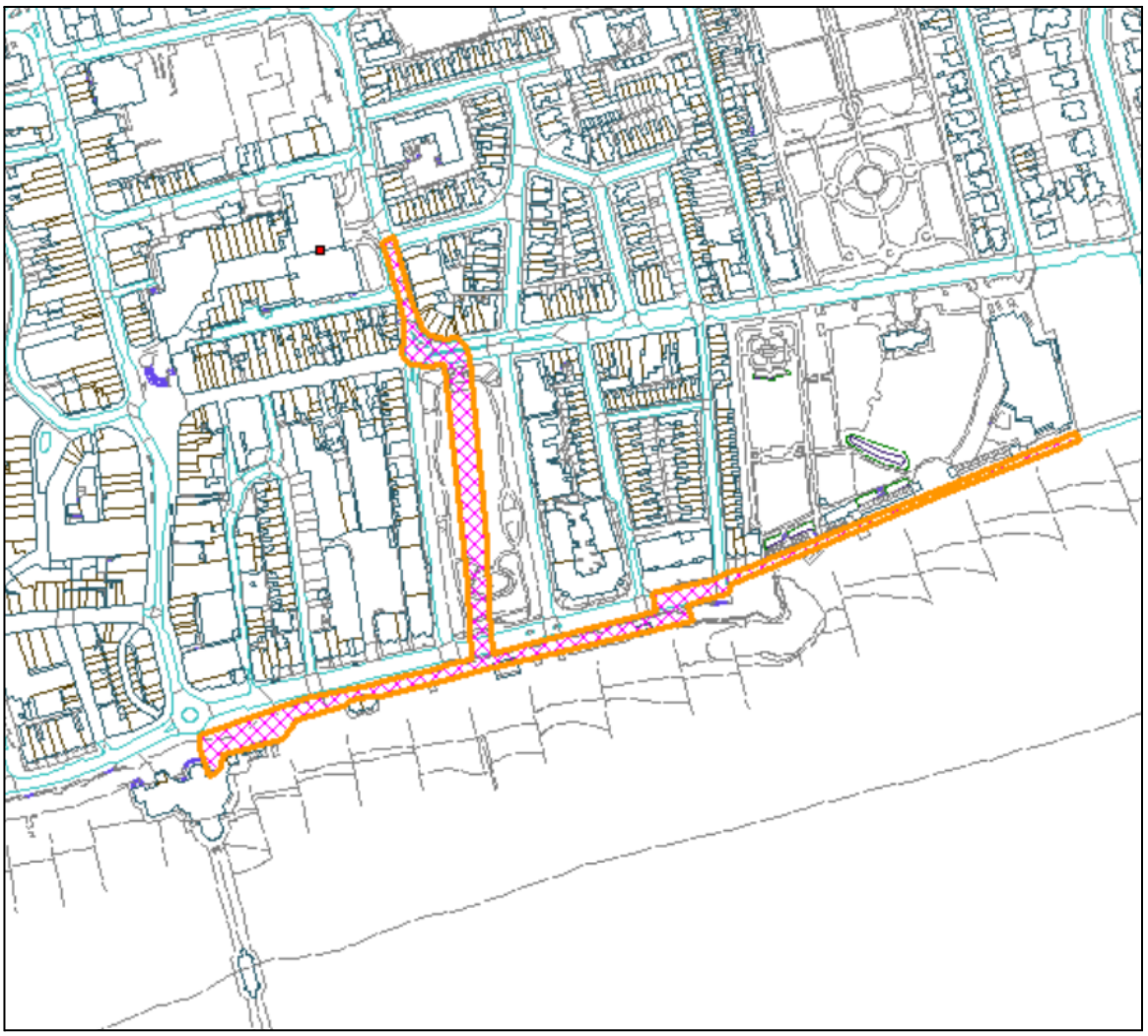
Application Number:	**AWDM/0968/25**	**Recommendation - APPROVE**
Site:	**High Street to Steyne Gardens, Splashpoint and Pavilion Theatre**	
Proposal:	**Extension to buried pipework and associated equipment to connect to the district heat network. The pipework will run underground along High St, through Steyne Gardens and east and west along the promenade to connect the energy centre with Splashpoint and Pavilion Theatre.**	
Applicant:	Megan Owen, Hemiko	Ward: Central
Agent:	NA	
Case Officer:	Louise Prew	



Not to Scale

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Proposal

The proposal is for phase two of the district heat network which is currently under construction within Worthing Town Centre. The first phase included the energy centre on High St with connections to the Town Hall, Portland House, Worthing Hospital, Connaught Theatre and Worthing Museum. The pipes were laid underground in a trench which were then backfilled.

Phase two of the heat network will connect additional buildings to the heat network. The new pipes will run south from the under construction energy centre on High St towards the beachfront through Steyne Gardens. East and west links along the promenade will connect Splashpoint and Pavilion Theatre. All of the pipes will be underground as per the permission for phase 1.

The application documents describe the heat network as follows:

Hemiko will be installing a network of highly insulated underground pipes in the ground. These pipes will carry hot water from the central Energy Centre to buildings across Worthing, forming the core infrastructure of the Worthing Heat Network. This buried pipework is what allows low-carbon heat to be delivered efficiently and sustainably to homes, businesses, and public facilities.

Unlike traditional gas or electric utilities, the Worthing Heat Network uses underground pipes to deliver centralised heat, reducing the need for individual systems and offering a more efficient, future-ready heating solution.

During the course of the application the route has been more closely defined and the red line boundary reduced as a result. Revised documents have been submitted to show the revised route and reconsultation undertaken.

The application is before the Committee for determination due to the level of public interest and a councillor call-in.

Site and Surroundings

The heat network will be underground within Worthing Town Centre. The route is within a mixed character area that contains businesses, housing and hotels.

The route runs predominantly through Steyne Gardens Conservation Area. The western section will be within the South Street Conservation Area.

The route will be in proximity to a number of listed buildings along the route. The War memorial to the south of Steyne Gardens is Grade II listed as are properties on the western side of The Steyne, and northern side of Marine Parade. The heat network will connect to Pavillion Theatre, a Grade II listed building. There are also numerous local interest buildings in the vicinity of the site.

The route runs through the Historic Core of Worthing archaeological notification area and adjacent to Medieval Settlement Activity, High Street Archaeological Notification Area.

Relevant Planning History

AWDM/1196/23: Full planning permission for the buried pipework and other ancillary equipment such as valves associated with that pipework. The pipework will run underground across the town centre of Worthing and provide heat energy to multiple buildings across the Town. Please note, the infrastructure subject to this planning application is entirely underground so has no visual impact once the installation is complete. Permitted 28 March 2024

AWDM/1439/23: Proposed two storey Energy Centre, Thermal Store, electrical sub-station, car-park rooftop plant, and riser pipework. Permitted 26 March 2024

AWDM//24: Proposed two storey Energy Centre, Thermal Store, electrical sub-station, car-park rooftop plant, and riser pipework. Application to Vary Condition 1 of AWDM/1439/23 (approved plans).

Amendment: Roof top plant to be moved to the north end of the carpark roof; and relocation of containerised gas fired boiler plant room from the carpark roof to ground floor level internal to the carpark. Registered

Consultations

West Sussex County Council (as LHA)

WSCC in its role as Local Highway Authority (LHA) has been consulted on the proposals for highway safety, capacity and access. These works form part of Densification Phase 1 of the Worthing Heat Network. Phase 1 involves the subsurface installation of highly insulated district heating pipework within the public realm and highway network. The proposed route runs from the Energy Centre, down High Street, through Steyne Gardens (or adjacent roads).

The applicant will need to secure all the necessary consents to the scheme including the Traffic Management Plan which will be secured through a Section 50 licence. From a planning perspective the commitment within the supporting information to undertake the works at this stage is acceptable and no concerns would be raised subject the appropriate procedures being undertaken

West Sussex County Council (as LLFA)

As there are no alterations to the impermeable area or surface water drainage we have no detailed comments to make. We have no objection to the application. We'd strongly encourage the applicant to consider underground surface water sewers during the design stages, to ensure surface water flood risk is not increased elsewhere. If any unmapped surface water sewers are discovered during construction, please contact FRM@westsussex.gov.uk and the team may be able to assist.

Worthing Society:

I have now had the opportunity to discuss the application with our Heritage Team. We consider that, due to the extent of the works and disruption to the traffic system, it will be vital for Hemiko to engage with the local community regarding the phasing of the works. This will be particularly important for business owners in the run up to the Christmas shopping period which is so important to the local economy. Signposting for alternative parking arrangements will also be necessary. We have

noted the representation from the local business owner in response to this consultation.

The works will be within both the South Street Conservation Area and the extended Steyne Gardens Conservation Area. We are particularly concerned that the landscaping in Steyne Gardens and Beach House Grounds is respected and returned to its original layout. In addition, we ask that care is taken around the entrance and pathway to the Splashpoint Memorial Garden in honour of Worthing's fishermen and lifeboat crews. The garden is situated south of the Denton Shelter. Finally it is important to ensure that the Grade II Pavilion Theatre is protected from any potentially damaging sub-ground vibrations.

Network Rail: No comments

Adur & Worthing Councils:

Tree officer: I have taken a look at the proposal regarding trees and I have no concerns, there is one dead tree to be removed, any such works may need confirmation with Parks and Foreshore.

Environmental Health: There are no adverse EH comments for this application. I would recommend a condition for continued public liaison during the construction works as part of a CMP.

Officer's response: Following a request to increase the hours of works the following comments were received:

There would be no EH objections to these extended working hours.

Representations

Nine site notices were erected along the consultation route. 50 representations were received from residents and businesses with the following comments:

- Rowing club has concerns that the lack of access to the water will result in a severe impact to the club's income and future sustainability. There are specific events where access to the promenade is necessary throughout the year including the Worthing Regatta.
- Transport impacts due to closed roads, affect access to town centre
- Car parking should be free.
- Small businesses should not pay parking charges, business rates etc
- Impact on businesses over the christmas period
- Impact on christmas events - ice rink, markets, fireworks etc
- Works should be delayed until January
- More information required about detailed plans and descriptions
- Minimal consultation with local businesses, disregard for small businesses
- Phase 1 has caused a lot of disruption and destroyed Worthing
- Disruption will make it harder for disabled residents to get around
- Until successful testing of the system is carried out and an efficient heating system guaranteed there should be no further extension of the construction work.
- Lack of access to promenade businesses

- Need compensation for loss of trade
- Concerns about noise levels
- Benefits won't be felt by current businesses yet they endure constant disruption

Three comments in support were received in support of the project and its impact on carbon savings.

In September 2025, following revisions to the plans and additional information letters were sent to people who had previously provided comments on the scheme. 10 site notices were also erected along the route. No additional representations have been received to date. Any comments received in the remaining time will be reported at committee.

Officer's response: The applicant has provided a statement of community involvement which specifically addresses some of the issues outlined above. These include:

- Hemiko has designed its construction plans to limit works in the road, instead making use of Steyne Gardens and the Promenade. Just 16% of the total works required for this phase will be in the road.
- Hemiko has planned for its construction activities to begin in January and complete by the summer school holidays, in response to business feedback.
- Businesses and residents Hemiko spoke to, as well as respondents to the planning application, said that the core thing we could do to help with footfall was to avoid works during the run up to Christmas and the summer school holidays. Hemiko has scheduled works to this effect.
- Hemiko is also deploying its Community Fund. One of the aims of this fund is to help increase footfall in the town by supporting the events calendar and undertaking marketing activities.
- Beach access will be maintained throughout the works. This will be enabled by creating safe crossings before and after the designated work zones along the seafront.
- All businesses will be able to have continued access to their properties throughout the works. Hemiko continues to meet with businesses 121 to understand their access requirements, fire procedures, delivery schedules, and business operations, to agree plans to ensure access.
- Hemiko's works have been scheduled with noise management in mind, and we will be implementing noise attenuation techniques, such as sound absorbing mats during our active construction times where applicable.
- One written representation considered the noise impacts from the heat pump, which is not considered in this application. However, Hemiko conducted a noise study ahead of our first planning application.
- The application does not result in a significant impact on parking availability in Worthing.
- The works do not require any closure of High Street Multi-Storey Car Park. The pipework has already been brought across the entrance to the car park during the 3-day closure in August 2025. To complete the works, parking spaces will need to be suspended on Marine Parade, adjacent to the promenade. This is required to prevent a lane closure in part of Marine Parade. On balance, this was viewed as the preferred outcome.

- Hemiko has considered access to Ann Street in its plans. Access will be maintained throughout the works on High Street using an intelligent stop-go traffic light system that will allow continued use of the road during the works on High Street. Our site team will also liaise with surrounding businesses who need to take deliveries on Ann Street to further facilitate access.
- There will be a limited period of time where there is a temporary traffic management plan in place on Brighton Road whilst we bring our pipe along a lane of traffic and into Steyne Gardens. However, West Sussex County Council need to do some urgent signal upgrades to the traffic lights on Brighton Road at the north end of Steyne Gardens, and this would also require a specified traffic management plan. Hemiko are therefore collaborating with West Sussex County Council to complete our roadworks at the same time, to reduce road closures.
- Hemiko has designed its works schedule to avoid these key events, with the main construction programme due to begin in January 2026, and works in Steyne Gardens to start only once the Ice Rink vacates on 6 March.

Other matters such as free parking, compensation and whether or not the system is working before expansion are not material considerations and can't be considered as part of the planning assessment.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)
Planning Practice Guidance

Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036 (2023): SP1, SP2, SP3, SS3, DM5, DM6, DM9, DM15, DM16, DM17, DM18, DM19, DM20, DM22, DM24

South St Conservation Area Appraisal

Steyne Gardens Conservation Area Appraisal

Relevant Legislation

The Committee should consider the planning application in accordance with:

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that requires the decision to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that the application may be granted either unconditionally or subject to relevant conditions, or refused. Regard shall be given to relevant development plan policies, any relevant local finance considerations, and other material considerations

Section 73A and also Section 72 Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which require the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area.

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that requires the decision to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning Assessment

Principle of development

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Strategic objective 21 of the Local Plan (2023) is as follows “Facilitate affordable, clean, secure energy through the delivery of sustainable, energy efficient, low carbon development and an increase in renewable, decentralised, low carbon energy and heat networks to achieve radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.”

Policy SP2 states that the council will support and promote the creation of low carbon heating/ cooling networks and the delivery of renewable energy schemes.

The installation of the heat network piping is in accordance with the policies of the Local Plan, subject to the assessment of other material considerations.

The main consideration for this application is the effect of the development on the visual amenity of the area including the Steyne Gardens and South St conservation areas, impact on listed buildings, trees and highways and transport impacts.

Design and conservation

The development will be underground; once construction is complete the pipes will have no impact on the visual amenity of the area. However, the construction of the pipes may result in some impact on visual amenity and may impact heritage assets. The route is within two conservation areas, Steyne Gardens and South St, and in proximity to listed buildings.

During the course of the application, the route through Steyne Gardens was reduced and the route passes adjacent to the memorial garden to the south of the gardens. The intention is that the route will bypass the memorial garden by encroaching on the root protection area of a Norway Maple (discussed further below). However, it may be that during construction, the discovery of large tree roots means that the proposed route within the tree protection zone isn’t possible as it may adversely affect the health of that tree. In which case the applicant has indicated that the route may have to move eastwards where it would pass through the edge of the oval garden. In this case, the applicant has confirmed that they would carefully remove parts of the garden and reinstate them. A condition will be required that the applicant notifies the LPA if the route would encroach on the memorial garden. The condition will also ensure that the materials are carefully removed, stored and reinstated.

There has been significant concern regarding the impacts on a WWII bunker under Steyne Gardens. Photographs show the historic location but it wasn’t clear whether

the bunker still existed. The applicant was asked to undertake testing to determine whether the bunker remains. Ground penetrating radar and test holes were used and it was concluded that it is unlikely the bunker still exists. It is therefore not considered that the site would be a non-designated heritage asset. A condition will be required to notify the Council should the bunker be discovered during works.

There are listed buildings along the route but these are sufficiently remote from the works to not be affected, such as those on the western side of The Steyne, and northern side of Marine Parade with works concentrated on the promenade and within Steyne Gardens. Similarly, the route will run to the south of Beach House grounds but due to the location on the promenade is sufficiently remote to not adversely affect the setting of this building.

There are two listed buildings / structures for which the works will encroach on their setting. The first is the war memorial at the south of Steyne Gardens (Grade II). However, the route has been specifically designed to bypass the memorial so that it is not adversely affected. A condition will be required to protect the memorial at all times to ensure the construction does not affect the structure. The second is the Grade II listed Pavilion Theatre. Works will inevitably be within the setting due to connection to the heat network Listed building consent will be required separately for the connection itself which will address works required to the building itself. The construction works for the pipes are not considered to adversely affect the setting of the listed building.

The site passes through, and adjacent to, two archaeological notification areas. The applicant has agreed to a watching brief during construction works. This will be secured by condition.

Impact on trees and biodiversity net gain

Policy DM19 seeks to ensure that trees aren't affected by development. The trees are also protected due to their location within the conservation area. The proposed route through Steyne Gardens has the ability to affect trees within the gardens and the impact on these needs to be carefully considered.

The application was accompanied by a Tree Valuation and Condition Survey carried out by JBA Consulting. The survey was commissioned to identify any arboricultural constraints and assess the health and condition of the trees growing at the site. Of the 98 trees assessed, 31 were assessed as Category A and a further 46 as Category B trees. Only one was considered to be Category U.

Following revisions to the route, additional information was submitted outlining the impact on root protection areas for any trees which the route would come in contact with. These are:
• T4 London plane – Mature, Category A (high quality)
• T5 Lime – Early mature, Category B (moderate quality)
• T62 Ash – Young, Category C (low quality)
• T63 Norway maple – Mature, Category A (high quality)

The document analysed the impact on each tree as follows:

Table 1 RPA intrusions

Tree Id	Indication of % of intrusion into the RPA	Notes
T4	<10%	Works will cut through an area of existing hard standing.
T5	~15%	Works will cut through an area of existing hard standing.
T62	~30%	The long-term retention of this tree in the current location to the pipe is not desirable, as it may impact future maintenance.
T63	~40%	The route will bring it into close proximity with the tree stem and the Memorial Gardens wall.

The report makes a number of recommendations and concludes as follows:

"*With soil vacuum extraction as the primary excavation method, strict soil protection, and flexibility in trench design, it is considered that the client can install the heating pipe infrastructure while minimising impact to retained trees. T4, T5, and T63 can be safely retained with appropriate safeguards and using appropriate methodology. It is proposed that T62 should be transplanted elsewhere on site with good prospects for successful establishment, due to its relative age*."

The proposals have been reviewed by the Council's tree officer who has advised that it is unlikely that T62 could be adequately relocated and a replacement tree should be planted.

In relation to the category A Norway Maple, the tree officer suggested the proposed works were more likely to be successful but that there should be contingency should the tree not tolerate the works within its root protection area. He suggested a condition requiring a replacement tree should the tree show signs of deterioration over the next two years.

The removal of any trees triggers biodiversity net gain. A minimum of 10% gain is required due to the proposed removal of the ash tree. The applicant has therefore been asked to complete the small sites metric prior to the committee meeting. The biodiversity net gain plan will be therefore secured by condition and should the Norway Maple show signs of deterioration over the next two years then any further required biodiversity net gain will be secured accordingly.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties
Policy DM2 of Worthing's Local Plan says that development must make the best use of land with particular consideration given to the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

The main impacts will arise from construction works. A construction management plan will be required to ensure that impacts on residents, and neighbouring

businesses are minimised.

The applicant has indicated that they would be seeking hours of working from 8am to 7pm Mondays to Sundays. The environmental health officer has been consulted on the revised hours and has not raised an objection.

Transport and highways

Works will be undertaken with the highway due to the nature of the development. The applicant's route statement has considered the impact on highways and specifically selected a route which minimises construction in the highways and therefore road closures. Reasons given for minimising works in the street included extensive highways traffic management, diversions, parking bay suspensions, and the potential for local loss of tourism revenue.

Some works in the highway are inevitable, particularly on High St and at Marine Parade near the promenade. A construction management plan will be required and the applicant will need to apply for the necessary consents from West Sussex County Council.

Water and flooding
Policy DM20 of Worthing's Local Plan requires development to manage and reduce the risk of flooding. The development runs through areas at high risk from surface water flooding and into a functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b). It is not considered the development would increase the risk of flooding after works have been completed. The Lead Local Flood Authority has raised no objection to the scheme.

Conclusion

The expansion of the heat network complies with policies within the Worthing Local Plan which state that the council will support and promote the creation of low carbon heating/cooling networks. There will be some effects during the construction of the system but it is considered that these can be adequately managed by condition. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Recommendation

GRANT permission subject to Conditions:-

1. Approved plans.
2. Standard time limit.
3. Development in accordance with Note on file - Steyne Gardens Trees including soil vacuum extraction. Watching brief
4. Relocation of tree T62 to be agreed with the Council
5. Details of mulch rings to be agreed with the Council
6. BNG plan to be submitted
7. Construction management plan
8. Benches to be carefully moved and stored while works are taking place and replaced following works

9. Archaeological watching brief
10. Notify LPA should the works affect the memorial garden and all materials to be carefully stored prior to reinstatement.