Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0891/25 Recommendation: APPROVE

Site: Saxon House, Little High Street, Worthing, West Sussex

Proposal: Change of use from offices only (Use Class Egi) to community use / offices (Use Class E) including erection of glazed single storey front extension; two-storey rear extension for lift; fencing to enclosed sensory garden; alterations to fenestration; terrace and balustrade; mobility scooter store and photovoltaic panels on roof

Date of site visit: 29/07/25

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications:

Site and Surroundings

The site contains a large two-storey detached building in use as offices / community space. The building is of modern construction having been built in the late 1990s. The area around the building is predominantly car parking.

The area is of mixed character with commercial and residential uses.

The site is located within the Little High St Conservation Area. The site does not contain a listed building, but The Hollies to the immediate east is Grade II listed. There are no TPO trees on site.

The site is within North Street / High Street Office Area.

Proposal

There are a number of elements of the redevelopment of this site. The proposal includes a retrospective change of use to allow community use on site.

Extensions are proposed in the form of a two-storey extension to the rear to provide lift access and a single storey sunroom to the front of the site. The sunroom would provide inside space for a café and would open out on to a deck with balustrade.

A sensory garden is proposed to the west of the site with associated surrounding fencing.

Other minor changes include a mobility scooter store in the south-west corner of the car park and rooftop PV panels.

The design and access statement sets out the background for the proposed works

“5.1 Guild Care in its role as a social care charity has acquired Saxon House in order to expand the services it offers to the local community.

5.2 The property provides an opportunity to enhance the existing services it provides in a series of leased and hired buildings and expand new services in a building which can be adapted to the specific needs of its clients, which include older members of the community, people with dementia and children and adults with learning difficulties.

5.3 The specific needs of the members of community requires the building to be adapted to be inclusive and accessible for all. Including enhanced elements which cater for the specific needs of individuals with complex needs. The design approach has been to create a centre which is both free flowing and reduces the barriers to physical and social interaction between visitors of all the Guild Care services. The design follows the British Standards Institute guidance particularly ‘’Design for the mind-Neurodiversity and the built environment’’ to aid the visitors experience of the building. These requirements has resulted in the building needing to be adapted internally and externally, therefore requiring planning permission.”

Relevant Planning History:

96/05423/FULL - FORMER HOMEFIELD ANNEXE LITTLE HIGH STREET WORTHING WEST SUSSEX ERECTION OF TWO-STOREY OFFICE BUILDING
STATUS: APP 5th February 1997.

97/05459/CAC - FORMER HOMEFIELD ANNEXE LITTLE HIGH STREET WORTHING WEST SUSSEX APPLICATION FOR CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT FOR
DEMOLITION OF ALL EXISTING BUILDINGS TO ALLOW REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE WITH A TWO-STOREY OFFICE BUILDING (WB/96/0917 REFERS)
STATUS: APP 16th June 1997.

97/05460/FULL - FORMER HOMEFIELD ANNEXE LITTLE HIGH STREET WORTHING WEST SUSSEX INSTALLATION OF ADDITIONAL OBSCURE GLAZED WINDOWS TO GROUND FLOOR EAST ELEVATION OF APPROVED OFFICE BUILDING (WB/96/0917 REFERS)
STATUS: APP 23rd July 1997.

10/0370/FULL - Installation of two air conditioning condenser units at rear (north) of building and construction of timber close boarded compound on existing paved area.
STATUS: CCN 30th June 2010.

10/0371/CAC - Installation of two air conditioning condensor units at rear or building and construction of small & discreet compound on existing paved area. Compound to be of timber construction, close boarded to match existing bin & cycle compound, painted to match.
STATUS: NP 5th May 2010.

AWDM/0085/21 - Replacement windows and doors to all elevations.
STATUS: APP 27th April 2021.

AWDM/0917/25 - Advertisement consent for five non-illuminated signs on front and side elevations
STATUS: APP 15th September 2025.

Consultations:

West Sussex County Council (as LHA):

This application seeks the change of use from offices only (Use Class Egi) to Community Use and Offices (Use Class E), including associated extensions and works. The site is located on Little High Street, an unclassified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 mph.

The existing vehicle access on Little High Street will be utilised for this development, with no alterations to this development proposed. The LHA does not anticipate that the proposed change of use to Community Use and Offices would give rise to a material intensification of movements to or from the site.

Ten existing car parking spaces will be lost as part of the proposals, reducing to 54 car parking spaces. The LHA does not anticipate that this would be cause for concern, given the car park will be used primarily by staff – most visitors to the site will be via minibus or mobile scooter, as outlined in the Design & Access Statement. In addition, the LHA recognise the sustainable site location that is well accessible on foot, by cycle and by public transport.

In summary, the LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Historic consultant:

The application is for the Change of use from offices only (Use Class Egi) to community use / offices (Use Class E) including erection of glazed single storey front extension; two-storey rear extension for lift; fencing to enclosed sensory garden; alterations to fenestration; terrace and balustrade; mobility scooter store and photovoltaic panels on roof.

The West Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the proposed development is in a location with the potential for significant archaeological remains to survive.

The proposals are within an Archaeological Notification Area delineating the western edge of the original historic settlement of Worthing (HER DWS8678). Previous archaeological investigation on the proposed development site, undertaken before the construction of the current building, uncovered extensive medieval remains, including

two grain dyers, pits and a sequence of boundary and enclosure ditches spanning the tenth to early fifteenth centuries. The finds included a locally important assemblage of medieval pottery (HER MWS6702).

The previous archaeological work on the proposed development site included a programme of trial trenching, followed by an area of excavation. Several of the proposed areas of development lie within areas that have been previously archaeologically excavated and so have no archaeological potential remaining.

Two elements of the proposals, however, are outside these areas of previous archaeological work and have the potential to contain significant archaeological deposits. These are the northern infill extension and the mobile scooter store to the west.

Accordingly, I recommend that the groundworks in these two areas are archaeologically monitored, to record any archaeological deposits that are impacted. Given the above, I recommend that the following conditions are applied to any consent, in line with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 218, and Worthing Local Plan policy DM24: Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

(1) No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until a programme of archaeological monitoring has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, for approval by the Local Planning Authority.
(2) The applicant will submit a final archaeological report or (if appropriate) a Post Excavation Assessment report for approval by the Local Planning Authority. This shall be submitted within 6 months of the date of completion of the archaeological fieldwork unless otherwise agreed in advance by the Local Planning Authority. A professional team of qualified and accredited archaeological contractors should undertake the work. The work will consist of the archaeological monitoring of any groundworks associated with the development, including (but not limited to) any foundation trenches, service trenches or soakaways.

The Council should inform the applicant of the archaeological recommendation. An archaeological brief can be produced from this office on request. This would detail the work required and can be acquired prior to the production of a WSI.

Environmental health officer: there are no adverse EH comments for this application.

Representations:

22 representations were received in support stating that the proposed improvements — such as the new front extension, sensory garden, upgraded meeting spaces, art studio, mobility scooter store, and solar panels — will make the space more accessible, welcoming, and useful for all of us.

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM8, DM16, DM17, DM24
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)
National Planning Practice Guidance
SPG 'Extending or Altering Your Home' (WBC)

Planning Assessment

Change of use

The building is in use as a community space for the occupiers, Guild Care. The former use was as an office under Use Class E. In 1996 planning permission for the erection of the building included the following condition.

16. The premises shall be used only for office purposes within Use Class B1 as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and/or because changes of use permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 may not be acceptable in policy terms and in terms of inadequate servicing arrangements for other uses within Class B1.

It is therefore considered necessary to regularise the use as a community space given that this condition restricts the change of use within Class E.

The site is located within a protected office area. Policy DM11 of the Worthing Local Plan therefore applies. Part c of the policy is as follows:

c) These key employment areas are essential in maintaining a strong and diverse supply of employment sites and premises to meet the needs of the local economy and given the significant land constraints the Council are seeking to protect them for employment uses appropriate to their location. Only in exceptional circumstances, where there is clear and robust evidence that the introduction of alternative uses is required to retain a diverse and resilient local economy, will such a change be considered. In undertaking any assessment regard will be had to the following factors:
i) robust evidence setting out the importance of the use to the future of the local economy;
ii) a demonstration that the introduction of the proposed use would not negatively impact on the functioning of the key employment area or the local economy as a whole;
iii) evidence that the loss of the existing use would not negatively impact the local economy and;
iv) evidence of alternative sites outside of the key employment areas have been considered and that no suitable sites are available.

The applicant was asked to provide a statement setting out how the proposals conform with policy DM11c above. The applicant provided the following short statement

"*DM11 – Protecting and Enhancing Employment Sites The proposals do not reduce the employable floor area or create any loss of employment potential in accordance with Policy DM11. The buildings current use as an office, day care facility and ancillary facilities broadens the employment landscape in the centre of Worthing. The proposals*

extend the ability for the building to employ a wider range of people with disabilities and improve the working environment".

As noted in the policy a change from offices will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, where there is clear and robust evidence that the introduction of alternative uses is required to retain a diverse and resilient local economy. In relation to the criteria the following comments are made:

i) robust evidence setting out the importance of the use to the future of the local economy;

The planning application provides the following commentary about the importance of this use. "The specific needs of the members of community requires the building to be adapted to be inclusive and accessible for all. Including enhanced elements which cater for the specific needs of individuals with complex needs. The design approach has been to create a centre which is both free flowing and reduces the barriers to physical and social interaction between visitors of all the Guild Care services. The design follows the British Standards Institute guidance particularly ''Design for the mind-Neurodiversity and the built environment'' to aid the visitors experience of the building. These requirements has resulted in the building needing to be adapted internally and externally, therefore requiring planning permission."

As noted in the submission documents and plans, the building retains office spaces and enhances this offer with ancillary facilities.

ii) a demonstration that the introduction of the proposed use would not negatively impact on the functioning of the key employment area or the local economy as a whole;

Saxon House is separated from the rest of the protected employment area by Little High St and High Street. It is noted that Wicker and Eagle Houses which are the closest buildings within the employment area have both been granted prior approval to change to residential. Given the distance from the other employment sites and that the use would retain office use on site it is not considered to negatively impact on the employment area.

iii) evidence that the loss of the existing use would not negatively impact the local economy and;

The proposed use retains employment on site including offices at first floor and Guild Care as a charity provides services to the local community. The following was provided which sets out the charity's contribution to Worthing

The level of employed people contained in the building is not necessarily going to reduce. The nature of Guild Care's services which include dementia care, elderly care and people services for people with learning difficulties require one to one skilled staffing not including the ancillary and admin staff supporting retail, home care, residential care and financial advice. It may be a different type of employment than straight forward seated behind desks but a more skilled work force than the previous incumbent.

iv) evidence of alternative sites outside of the key employment areas have been considered and that no suitable sites are available.

While we do not have analysis of other specific sites considered, the applicant has provided the following analysis for why this site in particular was considered the most appropriate:

"Guild Care had been searching for an appropriate site to expand their services for some time, Saxon House came on the market and its location and size was ideal for staff and visitor access and its proximity to their existing and retained facilities at Methold House. The office accommodation on ground and first floor, allow Guild Cares, wide skill base to be consolidated into one build. Over the past 6 months staff have been moving from numerous accommodation around Worthing to Saxon House as a strategy for ***Holland House*** *to become Guild Cares headquarters."*

It is recognised that there are benefits of locating services in proximity of other Guild Care buildings and the building will allow for consolidation whilst retaining employment uses.

Policy DM8 supports improvements to community facilities and specifically in point DM8b notes the provision of multi-purpose facilities and the sharing or extended use of facilities that can be accessed by the wider community will be encouraged.

The proposal to retain the Guild care facilities on site is considered to bring a community use to the ground floor which is in line with this policy. As can be seen in the letters of support from the local community the facilities on site are considered to offer a range of services for the community to enjoy and benefit from.

While it is noted that the development does not strictly comply with the criteria set out in policy DM11, the retention of offices on site and the provision of community facilities on ground floor is considered to benefit both the local economy and community and on balance the principle of the change of use is supported.

Visual Amenity and conservation

The extension to the rear infills a gap and will provide lift access. The extension will be visible in views from Little High St but is of a scale and design which complements the existing building.

The sunroom would be located to the front of the building in the place of an existing carpark. It would be constructed from powder coated aluminium. The sunroom would be in connection with a café use and would have an outside terrace with balustrade. The proposed scale is subordinate to the existing building and the materials considered acceptable in the conservation area. The glazed balustrades, terrace and garden will be an improvement on the existing car parking to the front of the site.

These elements of the proposal will be within the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building, The Hollies. A twitten with flint walls separates The Hollies from Saxon

House. The sunroom extension will be tucked into the gap of the existing building where it will be sufficiently set off the boundary as to not adversely affect the setting. The glazed terrace is also set off the boundary with The Hollies ensuring the development retains the space around the Hollies to protect its special character.

To ensure the development is constructed in accordance with the proposed plans and preserves the setting of the Hollies and the conservation area, details of materials and sections will be conditioned. Landscaping will also be conditioned to ensure the details shown on the plans are delivered to increase greenery and soften the appearance of the sunroom and terrace.

The sensory garden and fencing will enclose some of the former car park area but will be of a scale and materials appropriate for the conservation area.

The photovoltaic panels will be located on the front and rear roof slopes where they will be visible in views from within the conservation area. The appearance is not considered to be out of character given the modern construction of the building.

The new doors are similar to the existing in style.

The mobility scooter is of a modest scale and will be largely hidden behind the existing shrubbery.

Overall, the proposals are considered to preserve the appearance of the Little High St Conservation Area.

The site is also within an archaeology notification area. A watching brief has been requested due to the extensive remains found on site during the construction of the existing building. Given the scale of the rear extension, it is considered appropriate to require conditions to ensure that any remains are reported appropriately.

Residential Amenity

The extensions are sufficiently set back from the boundaries of the site so as to not impact light or outlook.

The application doesn’t include any extraction equipment for the café and it is noted that if these are required, they will require planning permission.

Biodiversity net gain

The development will not affect any existing habitat and will therefore not be required to provide 10% biodiversity net gain. However, it is noted that the sensory garden and landscaping will provide more greenery than is currently on site.

Transport

The existing vehicle access on Little High Street will be utilised for this development, with no alterations to this development proposed proposals result in the loss of 11 car

parking spaces. The LHA was consulted and raised no objection noting they do not anticipate that this would be cause for concern, given the car park will be used primarily by staff – most visitors to the site will be via minibus or mobile scooter. In addition, the LHA recognised the sustainable site location that is well accessible on foot, by cycle and by public transport. The mobility scooter store will be conditioned to be installed prior to use of the additional floorspace.

It is not considered that the proposed change of use to community uses and offices would give rise to a material intensification of movements to or from the site.

The terrace and sunroom are in an area of parking. It is considered necessary to ensure the crossover is removed to reinstate the footpath here. This will be conditioned to ensure that it undertaken prior to the use of the terrace.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Details of materials to be submitted and section drawings
4. WSI conditions
5. No primary cooking
6. Mobility scooter store to be installed
7. PV panels to be flush with the roof slope
8. Landscaping to be installed with details to be agreed
9. Crossover to be removed

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Louise Prew Date: 10/11/2025

Authorised by: Peter Barnett Date: 14 November 2025