

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWD/1533/25

Recommendation: – APPROVE

Site: 17 Liverpool Gardens Worthing Central Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Change of use from offices Class E (g)(i) to independent school Class F1(a).

Date of Site Visit: 24.02.26

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified:N

Site and Surroundings

The application site is situated on the north side of Liverpool Gardens close to the junction with Chapel Road. The property is currently vacant and comprises an older style terraced property over two floors. The property is situated at the back edge of the pavement and within a terrace of similar style properties.

The existing building comprises a suite of office rooms with a WC and kitchen on the ground floor and further offices at first floor and a door through to the first floor of 19 Liverpool Gardens.

To the west side is a small car park for eight vehicles bordered by a low flint and brick wall. A timber framed glazed extension with lead lined roof on the west elevation serves as the main entrance to the premises.

The site is within the Chapel Road Conservation Area

Proposal

The application proposes the conversion of the building to expand the speech and language and occupational therapy already within No 19 Liverpool Gardens which is associated with an independent specialist school for children with specialist educational needs and disabilities. The main school is at 58c Chapel Road.

The expansion into No 17 would create a science lab and classroom space for an additional 24 students.

16 additional full time employees are proposed.

The majority of the students will be continued to be collected from the taxi rank at 2 Railway Approach by the school's teaching assistants each morning at 9.30am, and arrive at the Liverpool Gardens site on foot shortly after.

The car park serving the property has parking for eight vehicles.

The normal school hours are 8.30am to 4.40pm, Monday to Friday.

There are no changes to the building proposed.

The children will keep the same arrival/departure routine that are currently in place with the existing school. It will be solely for children already placed with Educate U who will walk over for 1-1 speech, language and occupational health appointments.

Relevant Planning History:

92/05128/FULL - EXTENSIONS TO FORM ENTRANCE FOYER, STAIRS, TOILETS AND REFURBISHMENT TO PROVIDE 2 NO OFFICE SUITES

STATUS: Conditional Consent 30th April 1992.

AWDM/0809/21 - Replacement of tiled roof with slate

STATUS: Application Permitted 6th July 2021.

AWDM/1088/24- Proposed change of use from Class E to Class F1 (Independent school)

19 Liverpool Gardens Worthing- APPROVED

Consultations

The Worthing Society

This distinctive late Victorian building occupies a prominent corner site within the Chapel Road Conservation Area and is recorded on the Council's Local Interest List. I have now had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with our Heritage Team and we are pleased to note that there will be no exterior changes to the period building. The Design and Heritage Statement confirms the following:

'No physical alterations are required to the building to enable the change of use. The existing character, appearance and architectural features, including yellow brickwork, decorative bargeboards and sash windows, as shown in the photographs, will be preserved.'

The distinctive flint boundary walls to the car park should also be retained as they are important to the character of the conservation area.

Although this is slightly outside our remit, the Society has no objection to the 'change of use' to an independent school. Our only observation relates to the residential properties in Ambrose Place which partially overlook the car park area. As the increased use of the building and the car-park activity may generate more noise, a consideration would be to increase the height and quality of the fencing on the northern wall of the car-park area to reduce any adverse effect on the amenity of residents in Ambrose Place.

Environmental Protection, Environmental Health & Licensing

Subject to the hours of operation stated in the Planning and Heritage Statement, we have no objections to this application

WSCC Highways

WSCC has considered the proposal above and has assessed the submitted transport statement to assess the transport impact of this proposal on the local highway network.

Given the school will be used as an additional classroom/office space for the main school based in Chapel Road, the applicants have stated the children will not be dropped off at this location and children will walk from the Chapel Road site.

However, if the 24 children were to all be dropped off there are enforceable parking restrictions in place on Liverpool Gardens to prevent waiting. There are various parking options, including a car park to the rear of the school with 8 parking spaces, and also a pay and display car park across the road in Liverpool Gardens, although it is likely these are for members of staff, should a parent need to park for a longer time period these may be available.

To help mitigate future issues with parking, the site should have an up-to-date travel plan to support this new satellite building, and if one for the whole school is not already in place, this will need to be submitted to the LPA for approval. Please can the applicant confirm if they already have a travel plan and if this needs to be updated.

From a transport perspective this additional site will be accessed primarily on foot and as such the transport issues are not considered to be significant to cause any reason for refusal, as such no objection is raised.

Further comments

At this stage and given it's a school travel plan you can condition this as we don't charge the monitoring fee for STP.

Suggested condition wording:
School Travel Plan (to be approved)

Within 6 months of occupation (or a time frame to suit) a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan once approved shall thereafter be implemented as specified within the approved document. The Travel Plan shall be completed in accordance with the latest guidance and good practice documentation as published by the Department for Transport or as advised by the Highway Authority.

Reason: To encourage and promote sustainable transport.

Neighbour Representations

Ground Floor 22 Liverpool Gardens

On behalf of a neighbouring commercial operation our objection primarily relates to the suitability of use for the new stated purposes: office building site does not support the operational needs of a school in the said well-established commercial location - It is a constrained site, there is a lack of outdoor space, and absence of safe access arrangements for highways safety, traffic impact, harm to the commercial environment. Liverpool Gardens is a constrained, busy one way road forming part of the town centre traffic loop. It already experiences congestion at peak times. A school use would introduce additional concentrated surges of traffic during morning drop off and afternoon pick up periods. The nature of the road, does not lend to suitability for this use: there is no dedicated drop off or pick area or safe crossing point, this proposal is likely to result in unsafe stopping behaviour and increased conflict between vehicles and pedestrians creating significant safety risks for children, pedestrians, and road users. The building has no outdoor play space, no safe waiting area for children, and no buffer between the entrance and the road. The immediate area includes well established commercial services, which will be impacted by this new development: potentially obstructing deliveries, block access, increased noise, footfall, increased congestion, delay operations and create safety risks that will affect staff, clients, and service vehicles.

We respectfully ask the application for change of use is refused.

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM8, DM13, DM15, DM22, DM24
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment:

Principle

Policy DM8 states:

- a) The Council will support improvements to health, education, social, community and cultural facilities to ensure they meet the needs of local communities where it is demonstrated that there would be no unacceptable impact on the occupiers of adjacent properties
- c) The Council will work with service providers to deliver appropriate facilities in accessible locations. Proposals by service providers for the delivery of facilities in appropriate locations to meet the needs generated by new development and existing communities will be supported in principle.

DM13 states

- b) Changes of use and redevelopments within town, district and local centres will be carefully controlled to ensure that they support, rather than detract from, the successful functioning of the centres and their ability to meet local needs.

according to their function in the hierarchy . When considering all such proposals regard will be had as to whether they would:

- i) Make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the centre;
- ii) Not unacceptably impact on daytime footfall;
- iii) Maintain a strong role for the centre in providing a varied range of convenience goods and meeting other day-to-day needs;
- iv) Positively restore and/or enhance the character and appearance of the frontage;
- v) Maintain the continuity of active frontages;
- vi) Be of a scale and type of use appropriate to the size and function of the centre, or part of the centre concerned;
- vii) Ensure that any proposal will cause no significant adverse effects for the occupiers of neighbouring properties;
- viii) Ensure that that there will be no severe negative impact on existing parking arrangements;
- ix) Retain or re-provides ancillary facilities within individual premises, (such as loading, storage, staff or administrative facilities), unless it is demonstrated that these are no longer necessary for appropriate future use of the premises;
- x) Result in an over concentration of uses such as takeaways and other uses with closed and inactive street frontages. The Council will consider the role of the centre within which the proposal is located and other matters such as the numbers of existing similar uses within the frontage and any existing or potential issues. Permission will not be granted where harm to the vitality and viability of the centre, or the amenity of local residents and businesses, cannot be adequately mitigated;
- xi) Require conditions to be applied to any new development where it is relevant and appropriate to do so, in order to control the proposed uses and allow for a managed approach to future proposals for change of use, in line with the Council's aspirations and strategies for the area.

The site is located within the Primary Shopping Area where retail uses are concentrated and separated into Primary Shopping and Secondary Shopping Frontage under Policy DM13 of the Worthing Local Plan. The site is identified as being Secondary Shopping Frontage. In relation to Worthing Town Centre Policy DM13 states:

Worthing Town Centre

Spatial Policy SS3 (Town Centre) sets out the overarching principles for the Town Centre and associated seafront and it is the starting point against which all proposed development in these areas will be assessed.

ii) Secondary Shopping Frontage (SSF) - a wider range of uses will be supported provided they are active uses with active shop fronts will enhance the vitality and viability and complement existing uses. However, uses such as takeaways and uses with closed and inactive street frontages will be resisted; and

The site is within the Chapel Road South Character Area:

Chapel Road South / Guildbourne / Union Place South: Key town centre retail anchors, mainstream anchors, larger floor plate units, extended cinema provision and food and beverage leisure operators. To be located within a revised Primary Shopping Area following implementation.

The site is situated within the secondary shopping frontage and is currently offices. The building is currently vacant. Education establishments are appropriate town centre activities within accessible locations.

The building has an educational use one side and commercial activities to the south and west, it would bring back a building into use within the town centre and is off the main Chapel Road with its range of commercial uses with shop fronts in an area with mainly offices, health facilities and the rear of buildings off Chapel Road. The building does not have a traditional shop front, and the use would not have impact on the vitality or viability of the town centre or footfall bringing a building back into use.

The proposed change of use would not impact on the character of the conservation area.

The principle of an educational use in this location is therefore considered to be appropriate in accordance with policy.

Visual Amenity

The proposed use would not involve any changes to the internal or external building. There would not be an impact on the conservation area.

Neighbour Amenity

The site is within a town centre location surrounded by commercial development. The applicant has indicated that the school would only be used between 8:30 and 4:40 Monday to Friday. In this commercial location it is not considered that the use would have an impact on residential amenity. The Worthing Society has suggested a replacement fence to the car park, although this may be aesthetically pleasing the car park already exists. The children would be within the building and its use and hours which can be conditioned would have no greater impact than its current permitted use as offices.

Concerns have also been raised from a neighbouring commercial activity in terms of the suitability of the use on this constrained site with lack of outdoor space, absence of safe access, traffic impacts and harm to the commercial environment.

As indicated above educational uses are supported by policy in this sustainable commercial town centre. The use is associated with the main school in Chapel Road and related to the neighbouring property (19). The expansion into No 17 would create a science lab and classroom space for an additional 24 students. There is no outdoor space, and this is matter for the management of the school.

Most of the students will be collected from the taxi rank at 2 Railway Approach by the school's teaching assistants each morning at 9.30am, and arrive at the Liverpool Gardens site on foot therefore providing safe access for the children and limited traffic impacts.

Highway Impacts

The site is within an accessible location within a couple hundred metres of the existing school in Chapel Road. The application is supported by a transport statement. The building will not be used to drop off children with children walking to the site when necessary. WSCC are satisfied with the traffic, access and parking arrangements but have requested a school travel plan which the applicants have agreed to ensuring that the proposal would not have an impact on the highway.

Other Matters

Although the application is for use class F1 (independent school), Use Class F1 entails a number of uses all of which are appropriate for this town centre location, its restriction to purely independent school is not therefore considered to be justified. It would however be appropriate to restrict its hours of opening to ensure that the use would be appropriate and would not impact on surrounding residential development. Longer hours than the school operates are considered appropriate in this Town Centre Location should the use change to an alternative use within F1

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Hours of use
4. Within 3 months of occupation a Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan shall be completed in accordance with the latest guidance and good practice documentation as published by the Department for Transport or as advised by the Local Highway Authority. The Travel Plan once approved shall thereafter be implemented and maintained as specified within the approved document. The Travel Plan shall thereafter be monitored annually and the findings submitted to the local planning authority for review and any necessary new measures or interventions shall be implemented accordingly.

Reason: To encourage and promote sustainable transport in accordance with policy DM15 of the Worthing Local Plan and the National Planning policy Framework.

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, 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? Y

Case Officer: Jackie Fox Date: 25.02.26

Authorised by: Jo Morin Date: 25.02.2026