Expiry Date - 15/07/2026

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0362/26 **Recommendation – APPROVE**

Site: **Bar Next Door 21 Rowlands Road Worthing West Sussex**

Proposal: **Re-opening of side entrance in connection with proposed self-containment of existing flat on 1st and 2nd floors, removal of existing metal fire escape to rear and insertion of first-floor rear window to replace existing door; formation of bin/cycle store in rear yard. Change of use of ground floor from bar/drinking establishment (sui generis) to retail/commercial/business use (Class E)**

Date of site visit: 01.07.2026

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: Y – revised description to include change of use of ground-floor.

Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a 3-storey end-of-terrace, Victorian building located on the south side of Rowlands Road, within the designated town centre shopping area and the Montague Street Conservation Area.

The property is currently vacant but was last used as a drinking establishment 'Bar Next Door' on the ground floor, with ancillary staff accommodation on the upper floors. The building has a typical traditional floor plan with a rear off-shoot, enlarged on the ground-floor to occupy almost the full plot apart from a small, gated yard on the west side which currently accommodates a metal fire escape. The door from the yard opens onto a narrow, tarmac twitten between the terraced buildings fronting Rowlands Road. The twitten continues to the rear of the terrace and links to Western Row to the southeast.

The terraced building is faced in brick and render under a tiled, pitched roof with a front parapet. At ground floor, the frontage retains some of the elements of a traditional shopfront including a timber-framed shop window above a low stall-riser, with canted fascia and corbel detail on one side (shared with No.19). However, the stall-riser, shop window surround and recessed entrance have been tiled in modern, light grey tiles. The front elevation of the upper floors sits behind the ground-floor shopfront, articulated by decorative moulded cornicing and quoins, and bay windows with timber sashes.

The site is currently within EA Flood Zone 1 but is at risk of tidal flooding in the future (2070 to 2015) taking into account the effects of Climate Change.

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Proposal

Following amendment, permission is sought to self-contain the upper floors to provide a 5-bedroom residential flat. The flat would be accessed from Rowlands Road via the twitten between Nos 21 and 23 and would involve opening-up an existing (internally) blocked-off door entrance on the west side of the building. The existing metal fire escape would be removed and the door at first floor replaced with a sash window.

In addition, a change of use of the ground-floor is proposed from a bar (sui generis) to Class E (business and commercial uses).

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, a sound insulation design review (J4253 Issue 1) and site-specific flood risk assessment.

Relevant Planning History: None.

Consultations:

WSCC: The Local Highway Authority has raised no objection, commenting: -

"Initial Response
This site is located on Rowlands Road un unclassified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 mph.

There is no vehicle parking or access related to this site. The LHA does not anticipate the proposals would give rise to a material intensification of movements to or from the site.

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 NPPF (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Final Response
The change in the description is noted. This latest submission of plans includes a demonstration of two, secure covered cycle parking spaces which will promote sustainable transport options. The LHAs comments provided previously pertaining to vehicular access and parking would still be applied. Consequently, no highway safety or capacity concerns would be raised to this revised submission.

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 NPPF (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal."

The following condition is recommended if the LPA is minded to approve the application: -

Cycle parking
No part of the development shall be first occupied until covered and secure cycle parking spaces have been provided in accordance with plans and details to be submitted to and approved by the LPA.
Reason: To provide alternative travel options to the private car in accordance with current sustainable transport policies.

WSP: Recommend approval of the application.

Environment Agency: No comment.

Adur & Worthing Councils:

The EHO initially objected to the proposals noting that the (former) bar had a late licence authorising opening until 2.30am on weekends, commenting that the use of the flat by others not connected could lead to future residents being affected by noise from the business.

The Applicant has since amended the application to include change of use of the licenced bar to Class E (business/commercial uses) as well as providing an acoustic design review of the premises with recommendations for improving sound insulation. The EHO has no objections to what is proposed, subject to the completion of a sound test once the insulation improvements have been completed and prior to first occupation.

Representations: None received.

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, SS1, DM1, DM2, DM5, DM13, DM15, DM20, DM24.
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2026)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment

Background

The premises is vacant with ‘Bar Next Door’ having closed in December 2024. The property had been in use as a drinking establishment since the late 1960s (with no planning restrictions controlling its use). Although planning records indicate that the upper floors may have historically been used as a separate maisonette there is currently no separate access other than through the bar premises and recent use has been ancillary to the bar.

The key considerations are the principle of the proposed Class E use and loss of the bar/drinking establishment on the ground-floor, the residential use of

the upper floors as a self-contained flat, along with the effects on visual amenity and the character and appearance of the conservation area, the amenities of future residents and neighbours, and highway safety issues.

Principle

Loss of Bar/Drinking Establishment

Policy TC2 of the revised NPPF requires that in assessing development proposals, considerable weight be given to supporting the overall vitality and viability of town centres, including where this can be achieved through the diversification of uses; intensification and provision of residential accommodation (provided this would not conflict with policies in the development plan); and improving an retaining access to local shops and other facilities which provide day-to-day services for the local community.

LP Policy DM13 seeks to control changes of use in the town centre to ensure that they support the successful functioning of the centre and ability to meet local needs, according to their role within the hierarchy. The site is located within the secondary frontage of the town centre primary shopping area and the Rowlands Road Character Area which identifies the offer of this part of the town centre as comprising specialist/independent/niche retailing and a local retail services offer. The site is located on the very periphery of the town centre primary shopping area with the premises immediately to the west of the site designated as the Rowlands Road local shopping parade. Despite these different designations there is in fact little differentiation in the retail/commercial character of the terraced shop units which make up the south side of Rowlands Road, at least as far westward as No.79 Rowlands Road. The above description of the 'Rowlands Road Character Area' equally applies to the Rowlands Road local shopping centre, and, overall, this part of town (also known as the 'West End') appears to be thriving with relatively few vacancies. [A notable exception is Buzz Bingo on the opposite (north) side of Rowlands Road, which closed in January 2025 and for which planning permission has been granted for redevelopment (AWDM/1331/24).]

Most of the uses included within Class E would be consistent with this character and would support the aims and objectives of policy DM13. However, it would be necessary to restrict those uses which would not maintain an active frontage or make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the centre, including (d) indoor sport/recreation; (e) medical/health services, (f) day nursery/day centre and (g) offices/R&D/light industry.

Policy HC6 of the revised NPPF states that development proposals should not result in the loss of key community facilities and public service infrastructure unless it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the use being retained, either due to there being insufficient community support for the service it provides or because it is no longer viable or feasible to operate (in the case of public houses where commercial viability is an issue, evidence should be provided that reasonable steps have been taken to market the

property for its existing use without success for a period of at least 12 months).

It has been confirmed that the property has been marketed for sale by local estate agent Jacob Steel since 3 March 2025 without success. The marketing included a property brochure and sales particulars, online advertising and a 'For Sale' board displayed on the premises. The estate agent has stated that the property was scheduled to be offered for sale at auction but did not proceed owing to a lack of interest.

Not all pubs/bars/drinking establishments are considered to fulfil the role of a 'community facility', particularly in the context of a town centre environment such as this where there is other similar provision nearby, including the 'Rose and Crown' public house (100m to the East) and 'The Signal Post' wine bar (200m to the West). The absence of representations in relation to the current application supports this supposition.

Residential Use of the Upper Floors

Paragraph 8 of Annex D of the revised NPPF states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites. This should be sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing, assessed against their housing requirement in the development plan, or against their local housing need (calculated using the standard method) where the development plan housing requirement is more than five years old.

Paragraph 9 states that the supply of specific deliverable sites should include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:
a. 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or
b. 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply;
or
c. For the purposes of decision-making only, 20% where a local planning authority has a housing requirement adopted in the last five years examined against a version of the Framework published prior to December 2024, and whose annual average housing requirement is 80% or less of the most up to date up-to-date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method set out above.

Annex D also refers to the Housing Delivery Test, and makes clear that where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that delivery has fallen below the local planning authority's housing requirement over the previous three years, the following policy consequences apply:
a. Where delivery falls below 95% of the requirement over the previous three years, the authority should prepare an action plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in the future;
b. Where delivery falls below 85% of the requirement over the previous three years, a buffer of 20% should be added to the identified supply of specific deliverable sites. This is in addition to the requirement for an action plan;

c. Where delivery falls below 75% of the requirement over the previous three years, an evidenced unmet need for housing is deemed to exist for the purpose of applying policy S5(1)(j) in this Framework. This is in addition to the requirements for an action plan and 20% buffer.

The Worthing Local Plan was adopted on 28th March 2023. Policy SS1 allocates a minimum of 3672 dwellings to be delivered over a period of 2020-2036, an annual average housing requirement figure of 230 dwellings per annum.

As the Worthing Local Plan was adopted less than five years ago, the five-year land supply is calculated on the basis of this 230dpa annual housing requirement figure. This includes a 20% buffer consistent with NPPF Annex D paragraph 9c.

The five-year land supply as of 1st April 2025 shows 6.9 years supply.
Housing Delivery Test

On 17th August 2026 the Government published both the 2024 Housing Delivery Test measurement and 2025 Housing Delivery Test measurement. The 2024 measurement indicated that Worthing achieved 134% of the delivery target - as such there are no consequences arising. The 2025 measurement indicated that Worthing achieved 142% of the delivery target - again, no consequence arising

Policy L2(b) of the NPPF requires that substantial weight be given to the benefits where a proposal would make better use of vacant and underused land and buildings such as by bringing back into residential use empty homes and other suitable buildings, such as converted space above shops.

LP policy DM13(f) supports the efficient and effective use of upper floors that add to the vitality and viability of centres subject to the use of the upper floor not undermining the viability of the ground-floor use.

Residential Amenity – Future Occupiers

Concerns were initially raised by the EHO about the compatibility of the proposed use of the upper floors as a self-contained flat with the use of the bar on the ground-floor, the operation of which previously included late night opening and entertainment/music. However, the proposed change of use of the vacant bar premises to Class E, along with the proposed airborne sound insulation measures between the ground and first floor outlined in the submitted Design Review (J4253 Issue 1) designed to achieve DnT,w + Ctr = 50dB, has addressed this concern, subject to a preoccupation condition requiring the submission of a sound test result demonstrating that the minimum stipulated airborne sound insulation value has been achieved.

The proposed flat/maisonette would be accessed from the twitten to the side of the building. Although narrow, it is surfaced and maintained (by the Local

Highway Authority), forming part a footpath network linking Rowlands Road with Western Row.

The ground-floor layout would be reconfigured internally to enable an original side entrance (with its original Victorian door and portico entrance) to be re-opened. The proposed floor plan shows stairs leading up from a small ground floor entrance lobby to a lounge, separate kitchen, bathroom and bedroom on the first floor, with a further 4no bedrooms on the second floor. The proposed floor plan reflects the layout of existing rooms. The GIA of 144sqm would exceed the Government's minimum internal floor space standard of 125sqm for a 5-bedroom, 7-person dwelling over 3 floors. Despite the generous internal floor area, the lack of usable external amenity space means the proposed accommodation would be unlikely to be attractive for family use but would nevertheless provide an adequate standard of residential accommodation. The subsequent change of use of a consented dwelling unit to a small HMO (Class C4) could be controlled by imposing a condition but is not considered to be warranted here.

The removal of the existing external fire escape will allow for the creation of a small, gated courtyard off the twitten, sufficient to provide the flat with its own bin and cycle storage area.

The proposed Class E use could include restaurant uses which may also open later into the evening. Whilst such use would be consistent with the primary shopping area designation, it would nevertheless be pertinent to implement controls over opening hours to safeguard the amenities of future residents.

Residential Amenity – Neighbours

The attached property to the east (No.19) consists of a barber shop on the ground-floor with a 7-bedroom HMO to the rear ground-floor and upper floors (AWDM/1409/19).

The adjoining shop unit to the west (No.23/23A) has been subdivided into 2 smaller units comprising a barber shop and a specialist toy shop. Historic planning records indicate the residential flat above, accessed from the twitten, is in shared use.

The existing bar premises has been vacant for some time (20+ months) and neighbours will have got used to the absence of late-night activity. However, it is considered there would be no adverse impacts arising from the proposed Class E use in the context of this mixed commercial and residential location. Based on its dated condition/fittings, the ancillary accommodation on the upper floor appears to have been unused or at very least under-utilised for some time (i.e. longer than the period in which the bar has been closed). The proposed self-contained residential flat would likely result in a more intensive use but would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

Visual Amenity and Heritage

The Council has a statutory duty to have regard to the desirability of enhancing or preserving the character or appearance of its conservation areas.

The Montague Conservation Area Appraisal identifies examples of traditional shopfronts and architectural features including canted bays, timber sliding sash windows, string courses, parapets, plaster mouldings and pilasters as positively contributing to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Although in this case the shop front has been spoilt by insensitive modern tiling; the architectural features on the front of the upper part of the building undoubtedly make a positive contribution the historic character and appearance of the area.

No external alterations are proposed other than removing the existing metal fire escape on the rear elevation and installing a window at the first floor in place of an existing boarded-over door. The removal of the metal staircase can be considered an enhancement. Although annotated on the drawing(s) as matching the existing vertical sliding windows, precise details of the proposed replacement window should be secured as a condition of planning permission.

Highway Safety

There is no on-site parking provision serving the property. However, the Local Highway Authority has raised no objection having regard to the sustainable location of this site which is accessible to a range of local shops and services and within walking distance of various bus routes with stops nearby on Rowlands Road, Marine Parade and Heene Road.

Amended drawings show provision of cycle storage to serve the self-contained flat within the gated rear yard, which can be secured as a condition of planning permission. The existing commercial unit benefits from its own small, covered yard area.

Flood Risk

The site is within (present day) EA Flood Zone 1 for tidal flooding, but within the EA Flood Zones plus Climate Change (2070 to 2015) extent.

Flood mapping indicates the site is at ‘Very Low’ risk of flooding from surface water at present day and at ‘low’ chance between 2040 and 2060, and is outside the ‘High’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ chance of reaching or exceeding 0.2m, 0.3m, 0.6m, 0.9m and 1.2m of surface water flooding. As such, the whole site is shown to have a maximum surface water flood depth of less than 0.2m for the 1:100 year plus Climate Change for planning event (low).

The proposed self-contained residential flat on the upper floors of the building represents a ‘more vulnerable’ use. A site-specific FRA has been provided

which sets out the following physical design measures to help protect against flooding during an extreme flood event:

- Non return valves fitted to all drain and sewer outlets.
- Manhole covers secured.

Owing to the extent of the EA Tidal Flood Zone plus Climate Change area a dry escape route from the building would not be achievable. However, the location of the proposed self-contained flat on the upper floors will provide safe refuge.

The FRA recommends that the site owner(s) sign up to the National Severe Weather Warning Service and prepare a Flood plan to protect life and property during a flood event.

These proposed measures are considered proportionate to the flood risk.

As there is no change to the building footprint the proposal will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

A Sequential Test is not required under PPG as the proposal involves a change of use.

Sustainability

NPPF Policy CC2(2) states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and/or drawing energy from district heat networks, renewable and low carbon sources where this would be achieved through proposals for development. LP Policy DM17 requires all development resulting in new housing should incorporate renewable and low carbon energy production equipment to meet at least 10% of predicted total energy requirements. Such energy generation could take the form of solar PVs or ASHPs. No details have been provided as part of the current application submission but can be secured as a condition of planning permission.

The development is exempt from BNG.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions: -

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Agree and implement secure, covered cycle storage
4. Implement bin storage as shown on approved plan
5. Remove existing fire escape prior to first occupation of self-contained flat
6. Agree and implement proposed new window to first floor rear (south) elevation (replacing existing blocked-up door)

7. Implement recommendations of FRA prior to first occupation of self-contained flat
8. Notwithstanding the provisions the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) the ground-floor premises shall not be used for any purpose within Class E(d) (e) (f) or (g) of the Schedule to Order (or in any provision equivalent to those sub-classes in any Statutory Instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).
9. No use of the ground-floor premises (including arrival, reception or dispatch of deliveries) shall take place except between the hours of 0800 and 23.30 on any day.
10. No use of the self-contained flat shall take place unless and until the sound insulation scheme to protect the flat from noise outlined in the submitted Sound Insulation Design Review J4253 Issue 1 has been implemented. Prior to first occupation of the dwelling a test shall be undertaken to demonstrate that the attenuation measures as installed have achieved the minimum airborne sound insulation value of 50dB (DnTw + Ctr dB) and the results submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
11. No works to implement development shall take place until details of proposed renewable and/or low/zero carbon energy production equipment to meet at least 10% of the predicted energy requirements of the self-contained flat have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. No dwelling hereby permitted shall be first occupied until the agreed measures have been installed.
12. Construction hours

Informative

Pro-Active Amendment
New Address

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

Case Officer:	Jo Morin	Date: 06.10.2026
Authorised by:	Peter Barnett	Date: 6 October 2026