Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1164/21 Recommendation – Temporary Approval

Site: Burton Hall, 7 Sandown Road, Southwick

Proposal: Variation of Condition 10 of AWDM/1726/16 (Use by Scouts only) to enable use by other community groups

Date of site visit: Visited previously

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

Planning permission was granted in 2016 for a new scout hut on a bend in the road where Sandown Road meets Phoenix Way (AWDM/1164/21). Condition 10 of that permission states:

The new Scout Hall shall be used only by the Scouts for scouting purposes and for no other purpose within Class D1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (or in any provision equivalent to that class in any Statutory Instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

This application seeks permission to vary the condition to enable use of the hall by other community groups.

The application is supported by a statement from the scout group which states

"*the 1st Southwick Scout group has been operating from our HQ in Sandown road for 61 years since it was opened in June 1960. We have always had a good relationship with our neighbours and pride ourselves that this has always been the case.*

Obviously over the years parking has become an issue compounded by the fact that more households now own cars, and that at least two of our close neighbours own 5 vehicles.

To help the situation as best we can we have implemented a traffic management scheme where any parent that needs to drive to the hut for any reason will approach from Phoenix Way and leave by Sandown Road to avoid any congestion. We also ask that if they need to park and stay for any reason that they do not obstruct neighbours drives and do not park illegally. As far as I am aware most parents adhere to this.

At the present time we are only running two sections at the Group, Scouts meet on a Tuesday between 1900 and 2100hrs. There are only 7 young members in this section at the moment. Most of them live within a one 1 mile radius of the hut. Cubs meet on Wednesday between 1830 and 2000hrs. We have 14

members in the section at the moment. Again most of them live within a mile of the hut.

As a group we try to encourage the young members to walk or cycle to meetings and are in the process of fitting cycle racks. There has been some confusion over this as the racks should have been fitted when the building was completed but it was not possible as they would have been in the path of the fire exit. After some discussion it has been decided to sacrifice the small garden border that was meant to be for Cubs and Scouts gardening projects and fit the racks there.

The group itself has been seriously impacted by the pandemic. Our youth membership is down by at least 50% and we have no Beavers, (6 To 8 Year olds) hopefully this section will reopen in the future some time.

The exercise class come down occasionally on a Thursday between 1930 and 2030hrs approximately, they are a group of 6 to 7 older ladies that are part of our fundraising team. Historically they used to meet at each others homes for a social get together and a bit of exercise. We agreed they could use the hut as they were part of our team and it was better for them to have more space. Most of them are within walking distance I have been led to believe and only one drives down with her friend and they park off road on our disabled bay.

The Tots Group is very new to us and they have been trying for 18months to get a venue with no joy. They meet Tuesday and Thursday from 0900 to 1200hrs. After lots of discussions with Laura who runs the group we agreed she could use the hall in the short term until she finds another venue. It has been stipulated that none of the parents bring cars to the hut, but park in Crossroads or on the green and walk to the hut. This has been the case I am informed apart from a mother that is heavily pregnant, she is allowed to park on our disabled bay off road. Laura is a Brownie leader in Southwick and has agreed to join our group in the future when we are hoping to Start a new section called Squirrels, these will be pre 6 year olds. We have already had enquiries from parents at the tot group with their childrens siblings that would like to join our existing sections. Quite a positive result for the group.

We would obviously like to see the hall used more for community based activities and as a group are willing to let others use it. It is a purpose built space and it is a shame to see it empty all the time."

Relevant Planning History

AWDM/1726/16 - Demolition of existing buildings and subdivision of plot with new detached scout hall and separate detached house with access from Sandown Road

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The **Highways** Officer advises that the change in condition would create a new type of trip generation, increasing the hours and days the site will be in use. This will be an intensification of use of the site and WSCC requires more information to understand the overall impact.

There are no parking standards for this type of use class, E class – (Non-residential institutions including medical or health services, crèches, day nurseries and centres). Guidance in the WSCC car parking standards document recommends the applicant provides a travel plan to mitigate the use of car travel where possible. As community uses change over time the size of the building will determine how many people can use the building, as such a Framework Travel Plan should be submitted to the LPA for approval. A parking beat survey should also be undertaken to get a view on parking availability which could be used to inform users of the community building and local people living in the area. The applicant has already made a start on this by including the traffic management plan to encourage people to use a one-way system as the roads are very narrow. Increases in flexible working due to the pandemic may add additional pressure to parking during the daytime. A survey undertaken at different periods of the day will help to inform the creation of the travel plan.
A desk top review of the roads shows a mix of on-street parking and driveway parking. There are no parking restrictions, apart from some access protection lines, which are not enforceable. As parking is an amenity issue the LPA may wish to offer their own views. Cycle parking for the use will also need to increase, and if space allows buggy/ scooter stores are also very useful in encouraging parents with younger children to walk, or the elderly to leave their buggies in a secure place. In summary more information is required in the form of a framework travel plan to support the application to vary the existing condition.

2nd Response following receipt of further information from the applicant:

A framework travel plan was requested however the applicant has not been able to provide this. Nevertheless he has explained from his own view what the impacts are likely to be. Whilst it would be helpful to have a travel plan as under the D1 use class description, use of the building will be opened up, for a range of different uses; given the size of the site (148sqm) there is not a planning requirement for a travel plan. The LPA may wish to consider any impacts from an amenity point of view.

Adur and Worthing Councils: The **Environmental Health** Officer advises that there are no objections in principle but there are some concerns about the potential negative impact on amenity from uses such as fitness classes which could involve loud music and amplified speech, particularly as the hall is currently permitted to be used until 22:00hrs on all days. To manage noise a planning condition is recommended requiring the submission of a Noise Management Plan. The Noise Management Plan should identify the main sources of noise and methods of controlling them. This should be submitted and approved by Public Health and Regulation prior to this permitted use commencing. Thereafter the Noise Management Plan shall be adhered to at all times the hall is open and updated when necessary. The Noise Management Plan should include: 1. Monitoring of noise levels around site boundary with intervention when necessary. 2. A general incident log is to be kept which should include noise complaints. 3. Any noise complaints should be investigated and the Management Plan reviewed and updated if necessary. 4. Doors and windows closed when music is played

Representations

2 letters of support received:

We have lived opposite Burton Hall for over forty years. It has been a vibrant part of the community. The new hall is a credit to their determination to achieve such a terrific venue for future generations. This is an excellent opportunity to make the hall available to other members of our area to enjoy and support. Let's make the most of this opportunity

I live opposite to the Scout Hut and whilst parking can sometimes be challenging when the hut is in use (in terms of entry and exit to my drive when parents park opposite and tight up to my driveway), I think extending the use for wider community purposes, is an excellent way forward. The hut is under-utilised and there is a great need to create safe spaces for children and adults to come together for community activities such as yoga, mother and child sessions etc. I am fully supportive of this change of use.

2 letters of objection received:

I am making an objection based on the availability of car parking in the immediate vicinity of the hall. The premises are on a very tight road with a sharp bend. Immediate parking outside makes navigating this bend difficult and there is limited parking in the adjacent residential area. If adult groups started using the hall this will increase parking pressure for the hours that events are happening. I have no objection for other youth groups to use the hall, as, like the Scouts who generally arrive by foot or are dropped off/picked up by parents. Or indeed if it were groups limited to a handful of users (I believe that a Tai Kwundo, or similar group currently use the group) with very limited numbers, that do not disrupt things. But if it were say a Slimming World group, there could be potentially 30 additional cars parked for a long period.

I'm in favour of an increase in use and access of this facility as I believe it will benefit the wider community but it should not be at the expense of local residents who have happily lived with the scout hut, side by side, for many, many years. The new hut is situated on a very tight 90 degree blind bend so any increase in traffic will undoubtedly present an increased risk and hazard to road users and pedestrians alike, as the road leading into Phoenix Way from Sandown is relatively narrow. Whilst it's acknowledged in the application that there is no parking on site, it's not widely available on the driveways of local properties either. In addition, most households own more than one car which exacerbates parking issues in the area and means many vehicles are parked on the pavement. Existing use doesn't really cause any issues for local residents and whilst I'm broadly in favour of the proposal for an increase in community use, any approval of the application should be conditional and confine use to youth groups who are more likely to be dropped off by parents or cycle or walk to the venue. Adult groups using the hut are more likely to drive to the venue and stay parked for longer periods. It appears that the potential issue of parking is already acknowledged by the council in specifying a traffic management plan. The plan itself is extremely simple and appears to rely on common sense and goodwill with no specifics on how it will be policed and enforced. Asking users to "please consider" is akin to asking parents to

avoid dropping off their children outside the school and not parking on the pavement or blocking driveways. Unfortunately, people seem to switch off and think these informal rules don't apply to them and there's no reason to believe this traffic plan would be adhered to. So apart from the need to flesh out the traffic plan and provide more supporting evidence of how it's actually going to work I'm not inclined to offer unconditional support. The other caveat I'd suggest is that if approval is given, that it's for a time limited trial period to see if wider use creates problems that can't or are not resolved by the hut users with permissions revoked, if it does create issues.

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policy 15, 28, 33, 34
National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Planning Assessment

The use of the hall for expanded community purposes is supported in principle. The relevant issues are the effects on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers and the impact on traffic, parking and highway safety.

The use of the scout hall for community activities other than scouts would seem to be a sensible idea in principle, particularly as it is under used at present. However, the location of the hall, on a tight bend in a residential street, can lead to parking problems. WSCC Highways requested more information from the applicant about traffic management, including a Travel plan and parking survey, but these have not been submitted. Instead the applicant submitted a brief statement advising:

"In our original application we did send details of the Tots group travel survey. They will only be using the site 3 times a week between 9 and 12. We have fitted cycle racks as requested. As for buggys they have said that they will bring them through the fire exit on the disabled parking bay and put them along the back wall of the hall. We do ask parents and users to consider cycling and walking where possible.Since our next door neighbours who owned 6 vehicles have moved there are at least 4 parking spaces in the near vicinity as the new owners have only 2 vehicles which they park on their drive. I have personally walked around the block several times recently during daytime hours and there have always been several spaces to park in Sandown road within 150 yrds of the hut. Also in phoenix crescent, which is within 150yrds of the hut. As a Group we encourage our parents to car share or walk, they are generally only there for a few minutes as they drop off and leave straight away. Occasionally we will hold a meeting with the parents and they will have to park for a while. This is probably only about twice a year. The keep fit ladies share cars and usually there are only two vehicles, one parks on the disabled bay and the other in front of it across our own drive."

It appears that the pre-school group, Buckets of Fun, use the hall during the day but there is evening use in the form of an exercise class and usage could expand once permission has been granted. The issue of parking is a concern as there is limited parking on the site and the road layout restricts visibility which could be worsened if there are cars parked on the bend. However,

there have not been many objections to the proposal and those that have written have expressed their support for increased community use.WSCC Highways have subsequently not objected to the proposal and have left consideration of the amenity impact to the LPA.

The applicant has suggested that users are advised not to park inconsiderately and to walk or cycle where possible. This is not set out in a Travel Plan though and it is considered that any permission to expand the use of the hall should be subject to the completion of a Travel Plan. It also would be prudent to approve the application for a temporary period only at this stage so that the impact can be monitored. A Noise Management Plan would also be necessary in view of the close proximity of residential properties to the hall, plus a restriction to community use only.

It is considered that with these safeguards in place, the use of the hall by other community groups would be acceptable.

As this permission will vary the original approval, a number of other conditions relating to the house also approved under the original permission will need to be re-imposed and these are set out below.

Recommendation

APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Approved Plans
2. Temporary approval 1year
3. Travel plan
4. Noise management plan
5. Use restricted to F2(b)Halls or meeting places for the principal use of the local community only
6. Remove PD rights for dwelling
7. Hours of use
8. Obscure glazing to rear windows of dwelling
9. Retention of parking

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

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.

Case Officer: Peter Barnett Date: 22 September 2021

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 22 September 2021