

Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0479/26

Recommendation – Approve

Site: Powel Buildings, 4 Commerce Way, Lancing Business Park, Somington

Proposal: Change of use to a cafe with new ramped access to front, external servery to front with pergola over, kitchen extraction and 2no. containers at the rear for storage and preparation

Date of site visit: 16 June 2026

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a detached single storey flat roofed building in Commerce Way. It previously was in use as an office. Part of the building recently collapsed and permission was granted at the end of last year to rebuild it incorporating minor amendments to the design and layout (AWDM/1412/25).

A Certificate of Lawfulness was subsequently granted for the use of the building as a café/restaurant under Class E. It was found that the lawful use of the building was as offices with no restrictions (formerly Class B, now Class E) and therefore permission would not be required to use the building as a cafe/restaurant serving food and drink for consumption on the premises.

This application proposes to use the building as a café but also proposes external works, including a new ramped access to the front, external servery to the front with pergola over, a flue for the kitchen extract system through the roof at its southern end and the siting of two containers at the rear to be used for storage and preparation. Proposed hours of opening are 7am – 4pm every day.

Relevant Planning History

L/287/77 - planning permission was granted for a new office block

AWDM/1412/25 - External alterations due to structural issues – approved

AWDM/1445/25 - Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for a Proposed use as Cafe/restaurant (Class E) - granted

Consultations

West Sussex Highways: No objection. Comments: In terms of capacity, the LHA does not anticipate that the proposed change of use to café would give

rise to a significant material intensification of use when compared with what the site could currently generate within Class E.

Six car parking spaces are to be retained within the existing off-street parking area. Having measured the floor plans, a development of this size would require approximately 14 car parking spaces under WSCC Parking Standards for Class E Café Use. Consequently, any overspill parking would have to be accommodated on-street.

Whilst the LHA does not anticipate that the shortfall in parking provision would give rise to a highway safety concern, the LPA may wish to consider the potential impacts on on-street parking from an amenity point of view. Weight is given to the sustainable nature of the site location, this being well accessible on foot, by cycle and by public transport. I would request that secure cycle parking provision be provided in accordance with WSCC Parking Standards to promote sustainable travel.

Environmental Health: There are no EH objections in principle. We will need to know what kitchen extract and any other plant they may have, but this can be conditioned. Details etc to be agreed with the planning authority prior to the new use opening for business

Lancing Parish Council: Support

Sompting Parish Council: Support. This could be an asset to local businesses

Southern Water: Require details of foul and surface water drainage and measures to protect public water supply main

Drainage Consultant: No objection on surface water grounds. Due to the site, size, location, and type of development we would recommend the approval of the application with the following informative attached:
Informative 1: We have identified the site is adjacent to a surface water flood risk, therefore the applicant should consider creating a Flood Risk Emergency Plan in case of the event of a flood. The Flood Risk Emergency Plan should be created in line with 'Flood risk emergency plans for new development' as produced by ADEPT and EA and demonstrate safe access and egress in accordance with NPPF.

Representations

Objection received from Lancing BID:

Lancing Business Park is an industrial area which is home to over 250 businesses and 3000 employees, across circa 1,800,000 sqft feet of employment floor space and provides a major contribution to the Adur economy. LBP currently has an overall occupancy rate of 98.7%, with 82.5% of office space currently occupied on the park.

The 3000 employees based on the park and visitors to the park, have been serviced over the past two years by four onsite independent cafes, several mobile food vans visiting individual sites across the park throughout the day and the food retailers in Lancing Village. There is also a café at Brooklands

Park, almost opposite the entrance to Commerce Way. The largest café on the park closed last week due to lack of customers and now that site owner is considering the future of their café site in Marlborough Road, which is located opposite the Marlborough Road Car Park and next to the large HGV loading bay which can accommodate multiple HGVs who pulled in to visit the café.

4A Commerce Way, sits at the front of a B2 site, previously providing office space for Powel Engineering and subsequently was the home to Clarity Copiers. The building is currently being renovated following the collapse of the rear wall and has recently benefited from a new roof and windows. The building is a standalone site with enclosed yard, forecourt parking and shared side access with the company currently occupying units B&C. The renovations to date would make this site attractive to a number of office/ industrial users but the building has not been remarketed since improvements have been made, as the applicant has a lease in place to enable an electrical wholesale business and subsequently decided to change the use to a café.

Commerce Way is a busy arterial road that suffers from a lack of parking. The Council depot is at the far end of Commerce Way with workers arriving from 6am and many leaving by 2pm each day. The remainder of the employees in Commerce Way work weekdays between 7am and 6pm, with a low level of operation undertaken at weekends and bank holidays.

LBP has considered this application and has the following comments:

- Site Redevelopment – LBP welcomes the redevelopment of this site to provide another modern building on Commerce Way, to compliment the recent redevelopments at 5 & 6 Commerce Way.
- Reduction in office/ industrial space on the park – LBP is concerned by the loss of office / industrial space on the park as this site has the potential to provide a number of local jobs.
- Demand for a Café – LBP is concerned that the close proximity to Brooklands Park Café will reduce the demand for weekend and bank holiday use, with weekday café demand also not established.
- Parking Provision – Commerce Way is unable to accommodate any additional parking to support a café use at this site, especially HGV vehicles. LBP notes that the planning application does not contain information regarding the proposed parking layout and LBP is concerned that if an HGV vehicle were to pull onto the forecourt, there would be limited spare space to accommodate any further vehicles.

LBP is therefore unfortunately unable to support this application at this time and requests that the following information please be considered when determining this application:

- The application provides no employee information, and this site has the potential to provide a number of local jobs.
- The front forecourt parking is essential for the operation of this site, and needs to remain solely dedicated to parking. Please could full consideration be given to whether this will provide sufficient parking to support a café use.
- Whether provision could be made to safeguard the ongoing office/ industrial occupation of this site and to enable the site to revert back to Class E-Office if the applicant terminates the lease, to safeguard potentials future jobs on the park.

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policies 15, 25, 34, 36
National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Planning Assessment

Principle

The application relates to works associated with the proposed use of the unit as a café. While the objections from Lancing BID are noted, it must be remembered that a Lawful Development Certificate has been issued in respect of the use, for the reason that it does not involve a change of use.

All that is for consideration here are the external works, namely the ramp, flue and containers. These will be considered in accordance with Policy 25, which supports the upgrading of existing buildings on the Business Park, and other material considerations.

Amenity

The proposed ramp will be quite a large feature in terms of site coverage, running along the southern site boundary up to the pavement edge and across part of the front of the building. A window in the front is to be altered to a serving hatch, accessed from the ramp, with a pergola constructed over. In the context of the industrial surroundings, no visual harm is caused.

The flue is a small feature which does not cause visual harm. Details of the extraction system will be reserved by condition, as requested by the EHO.

The two shipping containers at the rear are hidden from the street view by the café building in front. They are common features on the industrial estate and no harm is caused.

The proposed opening hours are reasonable for an industrial estate where many units have unrestricted 24 hours use.

Parking and access

The frontage will largely remain available for parking with 6 spaces shown. The Highways Officer has advised that a development of this size would require approximately 14 car parking spaces so any overspill parking would have to be accommodated on-street.

However, the facility is expected to be used predominantly by workers on the industrial estate and many will be likely to walk to it. It is not considered therefore that the shortfall in spaces will cause harmful amenity issues in the area.

Cycle parking is conditioned as requested by the LHA.

Flood risk and drainage

While the site is adjacent to an area of surface water flood risk, the Council's Surface Water Drainage Consultant has no concerns with the application.

The applicant is advised to create a Flood Risk Emergency Plan in case of the event of a flood and an informative to that effect will be added to the permission.

BNG

The site is entirely hard surfaced and is exempt from BNG.

Recommendation

APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Approved Plans
2. Standard 3 year time limit
3. No seating outside
4. Parking spaces to be provided and retained
5. Cycle parking to be provided
6. Opening hours 7am-4pm every day
7. No takeaway use
8. Details of flue/extract system to be agreed
9. Foul and surface water drainage details

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.

We have identified the site is adjacent to a surface water flood risk, therefore the applicant should consider creating a Flood Risk Emergency Plan in case of the event of a flood. The Flood Risk Emergency Plan should be created in line with 'Flood risk emergency plans for new development' as produced by ADEPT and EA and demonstrate safe access and egress in accordance with NPPF

Southern Water

Case Officer: Peter Barnett

Date: 2 July 2026

Authorised by: Louise Prew

Date: 02/07/2026