

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWD/0125/26

Recommendation: – APPROVE

Site: Multi Storey Car Park High Street Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Application to vary condition 1 (Approved plans) and condition 3 (Tree protection works) and remove conditions 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11 (Tree and Steyne Gardens conditions) of application AWD/0968/25. Amendments include a change to horizontal drilling from open trenches, and a change to the development boundary to allow for a revised pipe route location through Steyne Gardens and to include pits to allow for the horizontal drilling. Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 10 are to be removed as the change to directional drilling will not include the removal of any trees and the memorial gardens will not be affected by the horizontal drilling.

ORIGINAL DESCRIPTION - Extension to buried pipework and associated equipment to connect to the district heat network. The pipework will run underground along High St, through Steyne Gardens and east and west along the promenade to connect the energy centre with Splashpoint and Pavilion Theatre.

Date of Site Visit: 5 March 2026

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified: N

Site and Surroundings

The heat network will be underground within Worthing Town Centre. The route is within a mixed character area that contains businesses, housing and hotels.

The route runs predominantly through Steyne Gardens Conservation Area. The western section will be within the South Street Conservation Area.

The route will be in proximity to a number of listed buildings along the route. The War memorial to the south of Steyne Gardens is Grade II listed as are properties on the western side of The Steyne, and northern side of Marine Parade. The heat network will connect to Pavillion Theatre, a Grade II listed building. There are also numerous local interest buildings in the vicinity of the site.

The route runs through the Historic Core of Worthing archaeological notification area and adjacent to Medieval Settlement Activity, High Street Archaeological Notification Area.

Proposal

The proposal is for phase two of the town centre's district heat network. Permission was secured in December 2025 for extension to the pipework.

This application seeks to change the construction method of the application from open trenching to horizontal directional drilling. This in turn alters the route of the pipework within Steyne Gardens and includes pits from which to start the drilling.

Relevant Planning History:

AWDM/1196/23 - Full planning permission for the buried pipework and other ancillary equipment such as valves associated with that pipework. The pipework will run underground across the town centre of Worthing and provide heat energy to multiple buildings across the Town. Please note, the infrastructure subject to this planning application is entirely underground so has no visual impact once the installation is complete.

STATUS: Application Permitted 28th March 2024.

AWDM/1439/23 - Proposed two storey Energy Centre, Thermal Store, electrical sub-station, car-park rooftop plant, and riser pipework.

STATUS: Application Permitted 26th March 2024.

AWDM/1212/24 - Application to Vary Condition 1 of AWDM/1439/23 (approved plans). Amendment: Roof top plant to be moved to the north end of the carpark roof; and relocation of containerised gas fired boiler plant room from the carpark roof to ground floor level internal to the carpark.

ORIGINAL DESCRIPTION: Proposed two storey Energy Centre, Thermal Store, electrical sub-station, car-park rooftop plant, and riser pipework.

STATUS: Pending Decision .

AWDM/0968/25 - Extension to buried pipework and associated equipment to connect to the district heat network. The pipework will run underground along High St, through Steyne Gardens and east and west along the promenade to connect the energy centre with Splashpoint and Pavilion Theatre.

STATUS: Application Permitted 16th December 2025.

AWDM/0246/26 - Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 7 (Construction management plan) and partial approval of condition 9 part (1) only(Archaeological watching brief) of approved application AWDM/0968/25

STATUS: Application Permitted 13th April 2026.

Consultations

Southern Water: Thank you for your correspondence, please see our comments below regarding the above application. Southern Water has no objections to the Variation of Condition 1 and the removal of Conditions 4,5,6,10 and 11 (Tree and Steyne Gardens Conditions)

WSP: Following a review of the submitted information, we note that West Sussex County Council have previously provided flood risk and drainage comments on the proposed development. Therefore, we would recommend they are consulted and continue to provide any further comments regarding this application.

WSCC (Highways):

From the Local Highway Authority's perspective there would be no objections to the proposals from a planning perspective. Any highway assets that require temporary resighting or removal will have to be reinstated. Any works on the highway would include highway licences from the LHA's Street Works Team prior to any works starting. **INFORMATIVE Temporary Works Required During Construction** The applicant is advised of the requirement to enter into early discussions with and obtain the necessary licenses from the Highway Authority to cover any temporary construction related works that will obstruct or affect the normal operation of the public highway prior to any works commencing. These temporary works may include, the placing of skips or other materials within the highway, the temporary closure of on-street parking bays, the imposition of temporary parking restrictions requiring a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, the erection of hoarding or scaffolding within the limits of the highway, the provision of cranes over-sailing the highway.

The Worthing Society: No response

Environmental Health: There are no adverse EH comments for the application to vary condition 1.

WSCC (LLFA): As there are no alterations to the impermeable area or surface water drainage we have no detailed comments to make. We have no objection to the application. We'd strongly encourage the applicant to consider underground surface water sewers/water infrastructure during the design stages, to ensure surface water flood risk is not increased elsewhere. If any unmapped surface water sewers are discovered during construction, please contact FRM@westsussex.gov.uk and the team may be able to assist

Tree officer: given the depth of the pipe installation at 8 to 10 metres, I do not see any concerns regarding the existing trees.

Neighbour Representations

No. of Contributors	2
No. of Representations	0
No. In Support	0
No. of Objections	2

I write to formally object to the above planning application.

While the principle of developing district heating infrastructure may be acknowledged as part of wider environmental policy objectives, the specific amendments proposed within this application raise significant planning concerns in relation to highway safety,

impact on heritage assets, effects on public spaces, and disruption to the town centre economy.

These concerns constitute material planning considerations and warrant careful scrutiny before any approval is granted.

1. Highway Safety, Traffic Congestion and Public Transport Impacts

The proposed works are located within one of the most heavily trafficked and sensitive parts of Worthing's road network, encompassing the High Street, Steyne Gardens and the seafront area adjacent to Worthing Pier.

This area functions as:

- A major vehicular route connecting the town centre to the seafront
- A key pedestrian corridor between the High Street and promenade
- A public transport interchange with numerous bus routes operating between the pier and Steyne Gardens

Infrastructure works involving trenching, drilling, traffic management measures or temporary road restrictions have the potential to create significant disruption to traffic flow, bus services, emergency vehicle access and pedestrian safety.

The documentation provided with the application does not appear to contain sufficient detail regarding construction traffic management, mitigation measures, or the likely duration and scale of disruption to this already constrained section of the highway network.

In the absence of such information, it cannot reasonably be concluded that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on highway safety or the operation of the local transport network.

2. Impact on the Town Centre Economy and Local Businesses

The area affected by the proposed works forms a critical gateway between Worthing's town centre and its seafront, an area that supports a significant concentration of local businesses, hospitality venues and tourism-related activity.

Businesses likely to be affected include hotels, restaurants, cafés and leisure facilities along the High Street and promenade, including establishments in the immediate vicinity of Steyne Gardens and the pier.

The proposed works also lie along a key route connecting the town centre to major seafront attractions including Splashpoint Leisure Centre and other recreational facilities.

Extended construction works or traffic restrictions in this location have the potential to:

- Reduce accessibility for visitors and customers
- Disrupt pedestrian movement between the town centre and promenade
- Reduce footfall for local businesses
- Deter tourists and visitors from the area

Given the importance of the seafront and High Street area to the vitality and viability of Worthing's town centre economy, the application should provide a far more robust assessment of these potential impacts.

3. Impact on Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment

The proposed works are located within close proximity to several heritage assets and historically significant elements of Worthing's seafront environment.

In particular, the Dome Cinema, a listed building, lies within the immediate vicinity of the works. In addition, the wider seafront area and Steyne Gardens contribute significantly to the historic character of this part of Worthing.

Under national planning policy and statutory duties relating to heritage protection, local planning authorities are required to give special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings and the character of historic environments.

The application does not appear to contain sufficient heritage impact analysis to demonstrate that the proposed route amendments and construction works would not adversely affect the setting or character of nearby heritage assets.

This omission raises serious concerns regarding compliance with heritage protection requirements.

4. Impact on Public Realm, Trees and Steyne Gardens

Steyne Gardens is an important public space used extensively by both residents and visitors.

The proposal involves works in close proximity to this area, and it is unclear from the documentation provided whether the potential impacts on landscaping, trees, soil structure and the integrity of the public realm have been adequately assessed.

Given the significance of Steyne Gardens as a public amenity space within the town centre and seafront area, any works that could affect its character or environmental quality require careful justification and mitigation.

The application does not appear to provide sufficient evidence that these matters have been adequately addressed.

5. Lack of Evidence that Less Disruptive Alternatives Were Considered

The application seeks to vary approved plans and alter the pipe route and installation methodology.

However, the documentation provided does not clearly demonstrate whether alternative routes or methods were evaluated, nor whether the current proposal represents the least disruptive option for this highly sensitive location.

Given the potential impacts identified above, the absence of a clear alternatives assessment raises significant concerns regarding the overall planning justification for the revised proposal.

Conclusion

In summary, the application raises significant and unresolved concerns in relation to:

- Highway safety and traffic congestion
- Public transport operation
- Economic impacts on local businesses and tourism
- Effects on heritage assets and their setting
- Impacts on public spaces and landscaping
- Lack of clear justification for the revised route

In its current form the proposal does not provide sufficient evidence that these impacts can be adequately mitigated.

For these reasons I respectfully request that the Council refuse the application, or require the submission of substantially revised proposals supported by detailed assessments addressing the issues outlined above.

I strongly object to any further obstruction by any of means in Worthing town centre and its surrounding area and I object even more strongly to the further destruction in Worthing of any more trees. Businesses and residents have suffered far more than

enough because of this heat network for which, to the best of my knowledge, the public was never consulted for their views.

Worthing town centre is suffering near total destruction with the loss of so many independent businesses as well as the big department stores. The conservative Council initiated its destruction and the labour Council is exacerbating it

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM6, DM22, DM24
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment:

The extension to the heat network was approved under application AWDM/0968/25. This application will assess only those elements of the proposal which differ from the application granted. It is noted that the objections raised largely raise issues which were considered under the original application.

Visual Amenity and conservation

The change to directional drilling will result in bigger areas for drill pits and smaller areas for pipe work. As previously the works will be underground with the areas reinstated to their current state once works have been completed. The change is not considered to adversely affect any heritage assets including the town conservation areas and neighbouring listed buildings.

Conditions related to tree works in Steyne Gardens have been removed where appropriate as the development is not likely to affect trees in the same way and won't require removal of any trees. The Council's tree officer has confirmed there are unlikely to be tree roots at depths of 8-10m below ground and therefore they won't be affected in the same way. Condition 3 has been altered to refer to the up to date technical note on tree protection and to specifically implement the recommendations such as to include protective barriers around all the trees.

Similarly, the works now avoid the memorial gardens and so there is no need for the previous condition to be retained.

Conditions relating to archaeology and the WWII bunker will be retained.

Residential Amenity

The change to directional drilling will not have an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity. The EHO has raised no objection.

Transport

A main concern with the original application was the impact of works on the town centre noting issues with highways closures and access to car parks. The change to horizontal directional drilling has been made to minimise time spent in highways to minimise the need for road closures. The CMP approved under condition 7 will continue to be adhered to for the duration of works. The LHA has raised no objection but has recommended an informative to be added about temporary access.

Other matters

Conditions related to times of works, access to the High St car park and promenade access will be kept as per the original permission.

Recommendation:

APPROVE subject to condition(s):-

1. Approved plans.
2. Standard time limit.
3. Development in accordance with Technical note
4. Replacement of tree T62 - Removed
5. Detail of mulch ring - Removed
6. BNG plan to be submitted - Removed
7. Construction management plan
8. Steyne Gardens works
9. Archaeological watching brief
10. Works within memorial gardens - Removed
11. Replacement tree for T63 - Removed
12. High St car park access
13. No work during set periods
14. Seafront premises access
15. WWII bunker

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.

LHA temporary activities during construction.

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

Case Officer: Louise Prew Date: 01/06/2026

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 1 June 2026