



LEWIS & CO

**PLANNING AND HERITAGE
STATEMENT**

Provident House, 50 Grafton Road, Worthing, BN11 1QT

ON BEHALF OF THE TRUSTEES OF HUMPHRIES
ALMSHOUSE



Client: THE TRUSTEES OF HUMPHRIES ALMSHOUSE

Site Location: Provident House, 50 Grafton Road, Worthing, BN11 1QT

Job History:

Version	Date	Author	Checked	Notes
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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lewis & Co Planning on behalf of the Trustees of Humphries Almshouse in support of a full planning application for the *change of use of Provident House, 50 Grafton Road, Worthing, from Use Class F1 (School) to Use Class E (F) Childrens Nursery.*
- 1.2 This statement will demonstrate that the proposed change of use of the building will not result in the loss of viable education building and will deliver a new community facility in the form of a children's nursery in a sustainable town centre location. The Statement will address all material planning considerations and demonstrate that the proposed use is acceptable in all regards.
- 1.1 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted application forms, marketing evidence and appraisal and drawings submitted.



2.0 APPLICATION SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 Provident House is a single-storey brick building constructed in around 1892 as a permanent Soup Kitchen and distribution centre for coal and bread by the Worthing Provident Relief Society. It operated in this capacity until 1922 (Source: The Worthing Society).
- 2.2 More recently the building was used as a school and offices (pupil exclusion unit), but this use ceased in 2020 and the building has been empty ever since.



Above: Photo of site's west elevation

- 2.3 The building contains three main rooms, a kitchen area, staff room, three WCs, two parking spaces, and a private rear garden, with a net internal area of 71.8 sqm.
- 2.4 The site is located within the Chapel Road Conservation area and is part of a group of ecclesiastical or ecclesial adjacent buildings South of Christ Church.

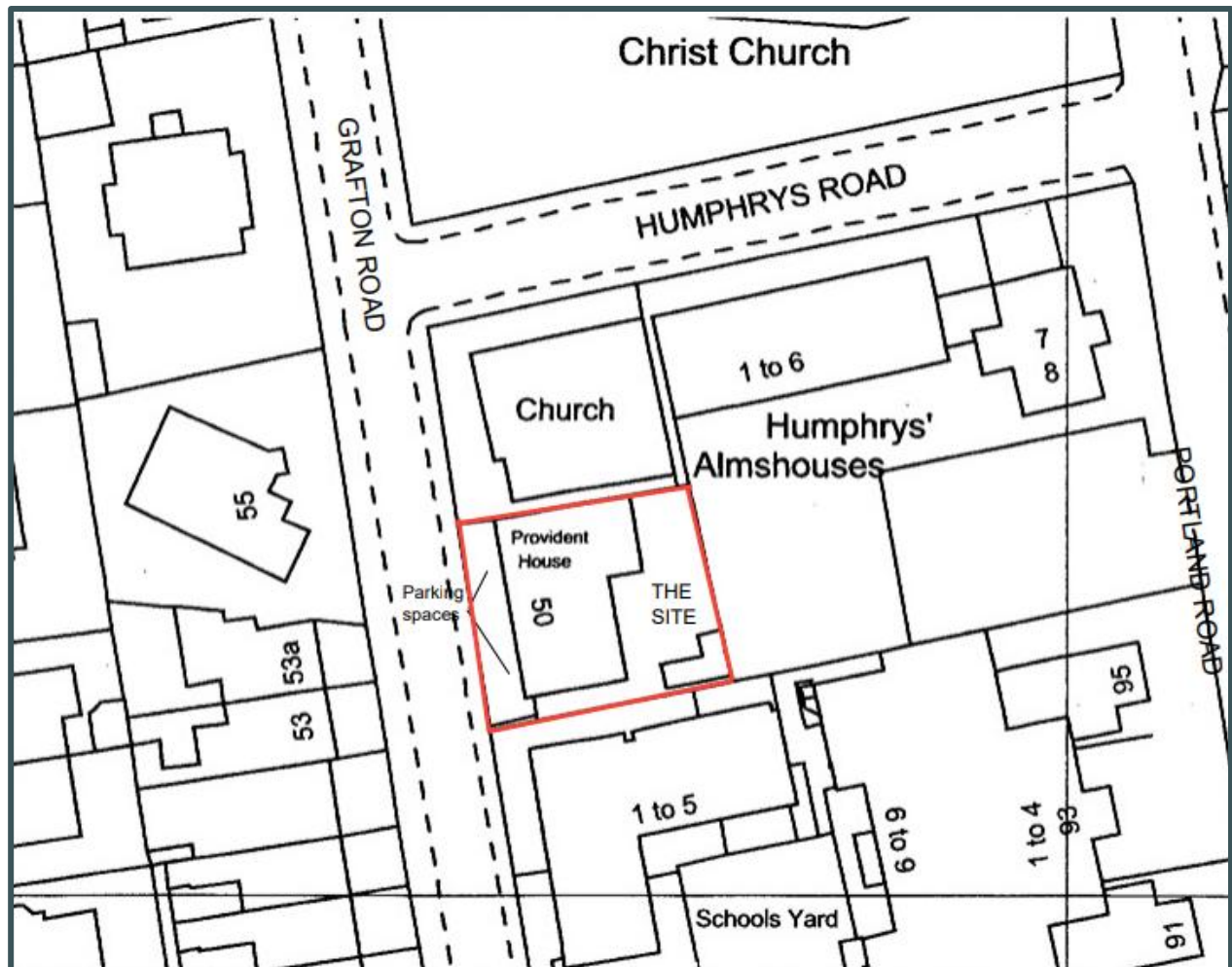


Above: Aerial Photo of site

- 2.1. Surrounding streets and buildings are a mixture of predominantly residential and community uses, with some commercial uses in the local mix.
- 2.2. The site is confirmed in the Conservation Area Appraisal as being “*on the fringe of the town centre*” (Source: WDC Conservation Area Appraisal) and the main civic centre of Worthing with the law courts library, Town Hall and Council offices are located a short distance to the north of the site on Richmond Road. The town’s main shopping and commercial areas are located close by to the south and east of the site.
- 2.3. The central location of the site in the town is ideal for a children’s Nursery - class E (F). The location is highly sustainable, and children, parents, staff and visitors



would benefit from the excellent sustainable transport connections and reduce reliance on the car.



Above: Extract of site location plan



3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Planning permission was granted in 2011 (WB/10/1001/FULL) for the use as a non-residential institution but was specified as being for the provision of education and ancillary office and this was controlled by condition with no permitted changes within the D1 use class at that time.
- 3.2 The school ceased operation in 2020, and the building is now vacant.
- 3.3 In 2026 a planning application AWDM/0232/26 for Change of use from school (Use Class F1) to commercial/business service/office (Use Class E) was refused planning permission by the LPA on the grounds that the proposed use as an office (or similar) would result in the loss of a community facility contrary to Local Plan policy DM8 and the relevant policies of the NPPF.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the entire building from class F1 (education) to Children's Nursery Class E(f).
- 4.2 No alterations are proposed or required to the interior layout or the exterior of appearance of the building.
- 4.3 Full existing and proposed plans of the building are submitted with this application.



RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 5.1 The adopted Local Development Plan is formed of the Worthing Local Plan 2023 and the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). Relevant policies and guidance are summarised below.
- 5.2 The Worthing Local Plan 2023, which covers the period 2020–2036, was formally adopted on 28 March 2023. The Plan provides the statutory planning framework for development within the Borough, setting out policies for housing, employment, community facilities, the economy, and sustainable growth.
- 5.3 Within this framework, Policies DM8 (Community Facilities) and DM10 (Employment and Economic Growth) support the proposals for the application site.
- 5.4 **Policy DM8** supports development proposals for community facilities:

DM8 PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES / COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- 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.*
- 5.5 The supporting text in the Local Plan confirms:
- 5.105 Communities need a range of education, health, social, community and cultural facilities and services to support their health and mental well-being. These are provided by a variety of service providers. It is important that these are accessible to all and respond to the needs of different ages and groups, particularly those with disabilities, those with limited mobility and more deprived members of the community. Locating these services close to the communities they serve, helps reduce the need to travel as well as creating strong inclusive neighbourhoods. (WLP2023 – Chapter 5)*
- 5.6 **Policy DM10** supports new commercial, business and office use within town centre locations, reflecting the Plan’s broader aim of promoting economic growth and strengthening the role of central Worthing as a focus for employment and service provision. This is consistent with the proposed change



of use to Class E(f) and the site's confirmed position "*on the fringe of the town centre*", close to major civic, commercial and employment use.

- 5.7 Together, these policies provide policy support for allowing the change of the former school use to Class E (f) use as a children's nursery in this sustainable central location.
- 5.8 The adopted Local Plan emphasises coordinated economic growth, efficient use of land, and supporting the vitality of town centres—all objectives that the proposal clearly aligns with, particularly as no external alterations are required and a new children's nursery will be provided by the proposed change of use.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) sets out the Government's most up to date policies against which all Development Plans should be prepared, and planning applications/appeals assessed. It is a material consideration carrying substantial weight.
- 5.10 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that "*It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.*" Local planning authorities are urged to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:
 - (a) *give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
 - (b) *work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.*
- 5.10 NPPF Paragraph 84 (in *Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy*) reinforces that planning policies and decisions should help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places at the right time to support growth, innovation and productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure. Childcare and early education facilities form part of that



infrastructure, helping enable people to participate in work (or to return to work).

- 5.11 In addition, Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out the three overarching objectives of sustainable development—economic, social and environmental—confirming that they are interdependent and should be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 5.10 The proposed change of use directly contributes to the economic objective by re-using an under-utilised urban building and supporting town-centre compatible uses. It also supports the environmental and social objectives by ensuring the upkeep of this historic building in a conservation area and providing new nursery accommodation.



6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 The key material planning considerations relevant to this proposal are:

- The Principle of Development
- Heritage
- Amenity
- Highways

Principle of Development

- 6.2 The Council previously refused an office use because it would result in loss of a community facility. This proposal resolves that concern entirely by retaining the building in community use.
- 6.3 The change of use is acceptable in principle. The change of use from a school to a children's nursery will retain an educational use of the building and provide a community facility within the scope of education and childcare.
- 6.4 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF directs decision-makers to give great weight to the need to create or expand early years provision.
- 6.5 The building has now been empty for several years and its future occupancy and active use is key to ensuring the building is maintained in good condition. This is particularly important given its location in the Chapel Road Conservation Area.
- 6.6 For these reasons the principle of the proposed development is acceptable and supported by Policy DM8 and the NPPF.

Heritage

- 6.7 The site is located within the Chapel Road Conservation Area.

Identifying the Heritage Asset



- 6.8 The application site is an unlisted building located within the Conservation Area. While the building is not a listed heritage asset, it and its neighbouring buildings contribute to the Conservation Area's character and appearance of the area.

Describing the works proposed

- 6.9 The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the building to Class E (F) Children's nursery. This requires no external alterations to the building.

Impact of the Proposed Development on the Heritage Asset

- 6.10 The proposed development will have a positive impact on the Conservation Area by reason that no external changes are proposed to the building, and that securing a viable use for the building will ensure its maintenance and upkeep and contribution towards the Conservation Area.
- 6.11 The proposed use as a nursery will maintain the building's historic communal function as a soup kitchen and a relief building for the poor of the parish. The nursery use continues that social/community legacy.
- 6.12 The building would retain its external features which contribute to the high-quality townscape of the area. The lack of any proposed changes to the elevations ensures there would be no harm to heritage assets, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved.
- 6.13 The proposal has been assessed against the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. In this case, the development involves no external alterations to the building and therefore results in no change to its contribution to the street scene or wider townscape.
- 6.14 The proposal will secure the active re-use of a currently vacant building, ensuring its ongoing maintenance and upkeep, which in turn supports the preservation of



the character and appearance of the Chapel Road Conservation Area. The development therefore meets the statutory test and results in no harm, and in practice delivers a positive heritage outcome.

Amenity

- 6.15 The proposed use as a children's nursery is compatible with the site's established use as a school and is typical of town centre locations such as this. The key potential impacts relate to noise associated with drop-off and collection periods and the use of external play space. These activities are inherent to nursery and educational uses and already form part of the existing lawful use of the site.
- 6.16 In practice, this activity is limited to short, defined periods at the beginning and end of the school day and is not continuous. External play also represents a normal and expected element of such use and would take place during daytime hours only. The level and nature of activity would therefore be consistent with what would reasonably be expected within a mixed residential and community setting.
- 6.17 The relationship with surrounding residential properties is entirely appropriate. The site is not intensively developed, and the building footprint, scale and layout remain unchanged. There are no alterations proposed that would introduce additional overlooking, enclosure or disturbance.
- 6.18 The characteristics of the use are modest in scale and fall well within the range of activity typically associated with small-scale community uses located within urban areas. Any potential impacts can be effectively controlled through standard planning conditions, particularly in respect of hours of operation and any external play arrangements.
- 6.19 On this basis, the proposal would not give rise to any unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Highways

- 6.20 The site is located in a highly sustainable town centre location where a significant proportion of trips can be undertaken on foot, by cycle or via public transport.



The central location, in close proximity to residential child catchment areas, supports the typical operating model of nursery schools where parents combine short drop-off and collection trips with existing journeys, including walking routes. This materially reduces reliance on the private car.

- 6.21 Drop-off and collection activity would be limited to short peak periods and would operate in a similar manner to other comparable urban nurseries. Given the modest scale of the building and the likely number of children accommodated, vehicle movements would be low and dispersed. The existing arrangements, including the availability of nearby on-street parking and the site's accessibility, are sufficient to accommodate this level of activity without giving rise to undue pressure on the surrounding highway network.
- 6.22 For these reasons, the proposal represents a sustainable pattern of development which promotes accessible childcare provision in a central location. The level of traffic generation and parking demand would be modest and consistent with the character of the area, and no severe highways impact would arise.



7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The application is submitted of behalf The Trustees of Humphries Almshouse in support of the application for change of use of Provident House, 50 Grafton Road from a school use to a Children's nursery.
- 7.2 The proposal will provide a viable class E that is suitable for the site and compatible with residential neighbours to occupy.
- 7.3 The site is on the fringe of the town centre, close to the main civic and commercial areas of Worthing. It is a sustainable location and well suited to a children's nursery.
- 7.4 The previous use of the building as a school is no longer viable and there is no demand from school education providers for the building. The proposed use as a nursery is an adjacent use to the current lawful use as a school and will cause no harm to the supply of school places locally.
- 7.5 The proposed change of use will enable the building to be brought into active use which will help to secure its long-term maintenance, upkeep and appearance within the conservation area.
- 7.6 The proposed development is therefore considered acceptable in principle and satisfies all material planning considerations as set out in this statement.
- 7.7 In the light of this, the Council are requested to grant planning permission without undue delay.

Lewis and Co Planning
June 2026