Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0585/25 **Recommendation: APPROVE**

Site: Site Of 19 And 21 Salisbury Road, Worthing, West Sussex

Proposal: Change of use from existing convent (Sui Generis) to 2no. detached residential dwellings (C3). Demolition of single storey connecting link.

Date of site visit: 01/07/2025

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Site and Surroundings
The site is located on the western side of Salisbury Road. The site contains two former two-storey detached houses recently in use as a convent for The Institute of Our Lady of Mercy. The area is predominantly residential in character.

The site is not within a conservation area and does not contain a listed building or structure. There are no trees protected by tree preservation orders that would be affected. Richmond Road Conservation Area is located to the rear of the site.

Proposal
The proposal is to change the use of the property from a convent back to two individual dwellings with four bedrooms each.

The application documents states that “In recent years, the number of Sisters has steadily decreased and properties such as this have become surplus to requirements. The Charity’s trustees have had to make the decision to dispose of the property and this planning application is part of the process of preparing the property for market. The Worthing Convent was formally closed in December 2024 and now sits vacant.”

Relevant Planning History:
No formal planning history

The applicant has advised that the conversion to the convent took place after the houses were purchased in the 1990s.

Consultations:

West Sussex Country Council

Summary
The Local Highway Authority (LHA), has been consulted on the above planning application for Change of use from existing convent (Sui Generis) to 2no. detached residential dwellings (C3).

The application building is located off Salisbury Road, a one-way road subject to 30mph speed restrictions.
The LHA has reviewed data supplied to WSCC by Sussex Police over a period of the last five years. There have been no recorded injury accidents at either of the accesses with the public highway, onto Salisbury Road. There is no evidence to suggest that the junction is operating unsafely, or that the proposed change of use would exacerbate an existing safety concern.

Access and Parking

The LHA note that local mapping appears to show that the southernmost access to no 19, is not served via a dropped kerb crossing and its use as a vehicular access for parking therefore would not only incur damage to the kerbstones and footway in this location but due to the on-street parking bay at this location, may also be at times inaccessible.

It appears that although this gated access has been in place for some time for pedestrian use, it has been widened between 2015-2018. The LHA are unable to verify however if this has ever been in use as a vehicular access point.

The LHA considers therefore that no 19 will have a single off street parking provision using the northern gated access and no 21 will be served with 2 parking spaces using the existing VCO's.

The LHA advise that the southern access serving no 19 should not be used as a vehicular access point, however may be retained for use as a pedestrian access.

The WSCC Parking Demand Calculator outlines that each 4bedroom property in this location would generate the requirement for three parking spaces, therefore any shortfall would need to be accommodated via on street parking. It appears that on street parking is available with a permit in Salisbury Road.

The LPA may wish to consider these parking matters from an amenity perspective.

VCO Access matters

This application has been assessed on the basis of the accesses as existing, and as advised above no 19 currently only has a single viable access point, which results in 1 usable parking space for this property.

The installation of a dropped kerb at this location to enable future use of the southern hardstanding would be subject to a vehicular crossover license obtainable from the Highways Licensing team.

I am aware however, that currently a local policy is in operation which prevents a new second access being created to serve a single dwelling due to the loss of on street parking provisions and therefore a second access in this location would be unlikely to be permitted.

The applicant is advised to discuss this further with the Local Area Engineer, should they wish to know more. https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-network-permits-and-licences/highway-licences/west-sussex-county-council-licences/dropped-kerbs-or-vehiclecrossovers-for-driveways/

The applicant should be aware that as well as planning permission they would also need obtain formal approval from the highway authority to carry out the site access works on the public highway.
The granting of planning permission does not guarantee that a future vehicle crossover licence shall be granted because the highway license process considers wider factors than are considered by the Highway Authority at planning stage.

Cycle Parking
Safe and secure cycle parking provision should be provided to encourage sustainable alternatives to the use of a car for transportation. The LPA may wish to condition this alongside any approval of this proposal.

Sustainability
The building is located within a sustainable location in central Worthing, there are opportunities for sustainable transport, with regular bus services operating from the A259 to the north- linking to Littlehampton, West Worthing, Shoreham-by-Sea and Lancing. Worthing railway station is a 10minute walk to the north of the site. Shops and amenities are situated within a 5minute walk of the property which further removes the reliance on the use of a car for transportation.

Conclusion
The Local Highway Authority does not consider that the 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 National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal. Should planning consent be granted, the following condition would be advised. 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 Local Planning Authority. Reason: To provide alternative

Southern Water: From reviewing the submitted documents, Southern Water has concluded that the applicant is proposing to use the existing drainage scheme. Therefore, we have no objections.

Environmental health: No objection subject to hours of operation condition

WSP (as drainage consultant): Following a review of the submitted information, we have no objection on surface water grounds. Due to the site, size, location, and type of development we would recommend the approval of the application.

Representations:
None received

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM1, DM5, DM15, DM18, DM20
National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
National Planning Practice Guidance
SPG 'Extending or Altering Your Home' (WBC)

Planning Assessment

Principle of development

The scheme results in the loss of residential accommodation for the nuns of The Institute of Our Lady of Mercy. As set out in the Design and Access Statement the number of sisters has steadily decreased and properties like this are surplus to requirements. The Worthing Convent closed in December 2024 and is now sitting vacant.

The existing use is predominantly residential in character providing living accommodation for the nuns with ancillary facilities such as a chapel and office space. The current use is not considered a community facility due to its residential nature, the requirements of policy DM8 (Planning for sustainable communities / community facilities) are therefore not considered relevant.

There is an identified need for housing in Worthing including four-bedroom family housing. The scheme will make a welcome contribution to the provision of housing and is considered acceptable in principle subject to the assessment of other material planning considerations.

Visual Amenity

The only change is to remove the linking structure between the two buildings. This is a later addition and its removal will allow the two buildings to be viewed separately again. A condition will be attached to ensure the materials used to make good the houses match those of the existing building.

Standard of accommodation

The proposal will reinstate two four-bedroom houses. The rooms are an acceptable size and both units would provide about 195sqm of floorspace well in excess of the minimum requirements of 124sqm. While the houses have small gardens this is acceptable given the conversion and that these buildings were houses prior to the conversion to a convent.

Impact on neighbouring residents

The conversion back to two dwellinghouses is not considered to have an impact on neighbouring amenity as the increase in bedrooms is not considered likely to result in an intensification of the site which would be materially different to the convent.

The proposal reinstates the two houses in a residential area so any noise will not be out of context with the surroundings.

Transport and highways

The application does not seek permission for a second crossover for 19 Salisbury Road and as noted by WSCC it is unlikely one would be granted. The development would therefore provide one space for no. 19 and two spaces for no. 21. This is considered to be an acceptable level of provision for these houses. An informative will be including drawing the crossover to the applicant's attention.

WSCC has noted a condition relating to cycle parking may be attached. While it is noted that the rear gardens are quite small there is space for bicycle storage should the applicant find it necessary. It is not considered necessary to require details by condition as the owners will have control over their own site.

Drainage
The proposal does not result in a change in the vulnerability of the use on site and there is no increase in permeable area. Mapping shows Salisbury Road is at medium and high risk of surface water flooding in the future with some puddling to the rear of no. 21. The Council's drainage consultant was consulted on the application and raised no objection to the proposals.

CIL
The development is not liable for CIL as no additional floorspace is being created.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Matching materials

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.

The applicant is advised that the installation of a dropped kerb would be subject to a vehicular crossover license obtainable from the Highways Licensing team and separate planning permission. However, local policy prevents a new second access being created to serve a single dwelling due to the loss of on street parking provisions. and therefore a second access in this location would be unlikely to be permitted.

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

Case Officer: Louise Prew Date: 01/07/2025

Authorised by: Peter Barnett Date: 1 July 2025