

UPPER CENTRAL

PLANNING STATEMENT 2026

24 Upper High Street

Worthing, West Sussex

Modular Shipping Containers

Flexible Offices · Art Studios · Sauna

Community Café · Gym & Wellness



Supporting Worthing's Bid for

UK TOWN OF CULTURE 2028

Prepared by Upper Central | 2026

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Site Address	24 Upper High Street, Worthing, BN11 1ER
Applicant	Upper Central Ltd
Description	Change of use and installation of modular shipping containers for mixed-use employment and community purposes
Use Classes	E(g) Offices · E(d) Art Studios · E(b) Café · F2/Sui Generis Sauna & Gym
No. of Containers	As indicated on drawings
Site Area	As indicated on drawings
Proposed Hours	Primarily a work space so working week and daytime usage envisaged with some evening activity
Town of Culture	Aligned with Worthing Borough Council Town of Culture 2028 ambition

THE PROPOSAL

Upper Central seeks planning permission for the use of shipping containers at 24 Upper High Street, Worthing — creating a permanent community workplace and social hub.

The proposal will deliver affordable flexible offices, art and maker studios, a community wellness sauna, café and gym within a modular container arrangement around an activated public courtyard.

The development directly addresses Worthing's position as the UK's #1 "Zoom Town" and will create 30+ local jobs and 40+ affordable workspaces — filling a critical gap in the town's cultural and economic infrastructure.

Upper Central is explicitly designed to support Worthing Borough Council's ambition to achieve UK Town of Culture 2028 designation, providing the physical infrastructure for a permanent creative and community hub in the heart of the town centre.



THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Modular shipping containers · 24 Upper High Street, Worthing

Artist's impression — indicative only. Subject to detailed design and planning consent.

WORTHING AT A TURNING POINT

Why this site, this town, this moment — and why culture is the catalyst.

#1

UK "Zoom Town"

Fastest growth of hybrid workers nationally
(Nationwide Building Society, 2023)

62%

Rise in remote workers

Based in Worthing since 2019 — driving demand for
quality workspace

2,000+

Pilot event attendees

Proving strong community appetite at Upper Central
pilot events, summer 2024

0

Creative hubs in town centre

Zero dedicated affordable creative workspace hubs in
Worthing town centre today

UK TOWN OF CULTURE 2028

Worthing Borough Council has set its sights on the UK Town of Culture 2028 designation. Upper Central is a direct and permanent response to that ambition — providing a dedicated cultural infrastructure that places makers, creatives and the community at the centre of the town's identity. A container village of working studios, collaborative offices and social spaces is precisely the kind of bold, community-led cultural statement that defines a genuine Town of Culture.

DIRECT ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

30+

Direct jobs created

Café, gym, studio management, events coordination, operations and front-of-house — prioritising local recruitment.

12+

Art studio units

Affordable creative workspace for artists, designers, ceramicists and makers — addressing near-zero town centre supply.

2,000+

Visitors per event

Evidenced by summer 2024 pilots. Regular programming drives sustained town centre footfall and dwell time.

40+

Affordable workspaces

Offices and hot-desks for Worthing's growing hybrid worker and freelance community, retaining spending locally.

£500k+

Est. annual local spend

Generated by workspace users, café, gym and event visitors spending in Worthing town centre businesses.

£1.2m+

Gross Value Added (est.)

Annual economic contribution to Worthing's local economy from operations, wages and supply chain spending.

LOCAL ECONOMY MULTIPLIER

Local Procurement

Café food & beverage operator to be Worthing-based. Minimum 60% local supply chain commitment built into tenant agreements.

Living Wage

All Upper Central direct employees paid at or above the Real Living Wage. Tenant operators encouraged to adopt the same standard.

Affordable Rents

Workspace rents capped at 10% below Worthing market rate for first 3 years, keeping the hub accessible to early-stage businesses.

Skills & Training

Partnership with Worthing & Adur Chamber and local colleges to deliver workspace-based training and mentoring programmes.

Event Economy

Outdoor market, cultural events and evening programming generating additional spend across neighbouring food, drink and retail.

Town of Culture

Cultural infrastructure that enables Worthing to attract creative investment, tourism and media attention aligned to the 2028 bid.

PROPOSED USES & SPATIAL LAYOUT

FLEXIBLE OFFICES	ART STUDIOS	SAUNA & WELLNESS	COMMUNITY CAFÉ	GYM & FITNESS
Use Class E(g) Hot-desking, private offices & meeting pods for hybrid workers, SMEs and start-ups. Affordable rents capped below market rate. Capacity: 60 desks	Use Class E(d) Affordable maker and creative studios for artists, designers, ceramicists and craft practitioners. Capacity: 8–12 studios	Class E(d) Community sauna & cold plunge. A new social wellness space for Worthing residents — Worthing's first of its kind. Capacity: 12–16/session	Use Class E(b) Café & food offer supporting the working community and public. Worthing-based local operators preferred. Capacity: 40–60 covers	Use Class E(d) Functional fitness & wellness space for members and day users. Capacity: 20–30 users

CONTAINER ALLOCATION

7 containers Offices	5 containers Art Studios	2 containers Sauna	1 containers Café	2 containers Gym	= approx. 17 containers Total
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SITE LAYOUT CONCEPT

Containers arranged in a U-shaped configuration around an activated public courtyard. Street-facing containers form an active retail/workspace frontage. Single-storey throughout. Phased delivery possible. All structures reversible with no permanent foundations.



Schematic — 17 containers total

Activated courtyard between container rows provides informal gathering space, outdoor dining, events and community programming.

THE SAUNA: A SOCIAL THIRD SPACE FOR WORTHING

Beyond workspace and culture, Upper Central will be a genuine community stronghold — anchored by Worthing's first public sauna.

A NEW KIND OF SOCIAL SPACE

The sauna is not just a wellness amenity — it's a place where Worthing residents gather, slow down and connect without agenda. In a town rich with community spirit, Upper Central's sauna will become a social anchor: welcoming for families, solo visitors, colleagues and neighbours alike.

OPEN TO ALL

Pricing structured for accessibility — daily community rate, local membership, family sessions and community-rate access for residents on low incomes. The facility is designed as a public asset, not an exclusive amenity.

COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Regular sauna use is associated with reduced cardiovascular risk, improved sleep and significant mental health benefits. As Worthing's first community sauna facility, Upper Central directly contributes to the town's public health agenda and Worthing Borough Council's wellbeing objectives.

THE THIRD PLACE PRINCIPLE

Home is the first place. Work is the second. The third place — somewhere between the two — is where community identity is forged. Worthing has long lacked this: a warm, welcoming, unhurried space with no barrier to belonging. The sauna fills that gap.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT & SOCIAL VALUE

Measurable social, cultural and economic impact for Worthing residents.

60+

Affordable workspaces

Hybrid workers and start-ups priced in, not out.

12+

Art studio units

Near-zero town centre supply addressed.

30+

Direct local jobs created

Predominantly local recruitment.

2,000+

Annual event visitors

Evidenced by pilot events, summer 2024.

1

Community urban sauna in Worthing

First public facility of its kind in the area.

EVIDENCED DEMAND

- Worthing is the UK's #1 "Zoom Town" with the fastest growth in hybrid workers nationally
- Pilot Upper Central events attracted 2,000+ attendees — proving community demand
- Zero dedicated affordable creative workspace hubs exist in Worthing town centre today
- Local pilot event businesses — craft brewers, artisan bakers, community kitchen for neurodiverse teens — all reported strong sales
- Families engaged with workshops, wild play and communal mural beyond conventional leisure
- WBC Economic Strategy (2023) identifies affordable workspace as a town centre priority
- Upper Central directly supports Worthing's UK Town of Culture 2028 bid by creating permanent cultural infrastructure

Sustainability is not an afterthought — it is the founding principle of Upper Central's design. Reused containers. Renewable energy. Reclaimed materials. Zero permanent foundations.

SHIPPING CONTAINER REUSE

The project's most significant sustainability credential. All 17 containers are repurposed from end-of-service logistics use — diverting 340+ tonnes of steel from waste. Embodied carbon is a fraction of equivalent new-build construction.

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

Structural fit-out uses FSC-certified timber, reclaimed hardwood decking, recycled insulation boards and natural rope detailing. No virgin concrete proposed. Finishes specified from local reclamation yards wherever possible.

ZERO PERMANENT FOUNDATIONS

Containers rest on surface-level levelling pads — no excavation, no concrete slab, no permanent land change. Full reversibility means the site can be returned to its prior condition at any future point with minimal disruption.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

20+ secure cycle parking spaces on-site. Showers and changing facilities for cyclists and runners. EV charging for servicing/deliveries. Car-free development policy — aligned with Worthing's Local Transport Plan.

SOLAR PV POWER

South-facing container roofs are uniquely suited to solar PV installation. The flat-topped modular arrangement will carry an array targeting 30%+ on-site renewable generation. Battery storage reduces grid dependency during peak hours.

BIODIVERSITY

Raised timber planters, vertical green walls on perimeter frames, pollinator wildflower planting and a rain garden along the rear boundary.

WATER & DRAINAGE

Permeable resin-bound aggregate to courtyard and pedestrian surfaces. SUDS-compliant drainage strategy — no increase in impermeable area. Rainwater harvesting for planter irrigation. Target: net reduction in surface water runoff.

LOW ENERGY DESIGN

PIR insulation boards (100mm min) throughout all containers. LED lighting with motion sensors and daylight dimming. Smart sub-metering per unit. MVHR ventilation to maintain air quality without energy loss. Target EPC B+.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Modular & Reversible**

All structures are non-permanent and fully removable. No permanent foundations. Complete reversibility at end of use.
- Heritage-Informed Palette**

Flint-effect panels, chalk render, natural timber and rope reference Worthing's vernacular alongside contemporary polycarbonate and anthracite steel.
- Human Scale**

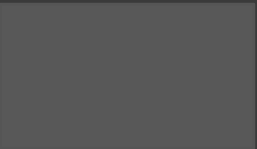
Single-storey containers at 2.9m maintain a human-scale streetscape. No structure exceeds 3.5m at parapet.
- Active Frontage**

Full-width glazed doors on all public-facing containers create active retail/workspace frontages consistent with town centre character.
- Landscape & Greening**

Raised planters, climbing green walls and wildflower buffers soften the industrial aesthetic and contribute to BNG.
- Reclaimed & Sustainable**

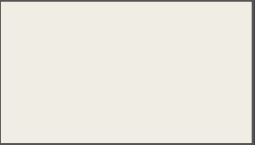
All decorative and secondary materials specified from reclaimed sources first. Waste minimised through modular off-site fit-out.

INDICATIVE MATERIAL PALETTE / MATERIALS



FLINT

Flint-effect cladding — local vernacular



CHALK

White render on gable ends



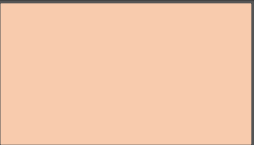
RECLAIMED TIMBER

FSC / reclaimed hardwood decking



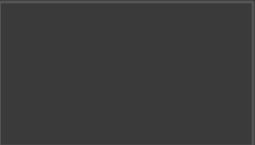
ROPE

Natural sisal rope — fascias & wayfinding



POLYCARBONATE

Corrugated — light diffusion



STEEL (RAL7016)

Powder-coated anthracite container frames

Document	Policy	Topic	Compliance Statement	
NPPF	Para 86–88	Town centre uses	Active employment and community uses at a town centre location. Consistent with sequential test.	✓
NPPF	Para 130	Design quality	Distinctive modular design responding to local context. Avoids harm to the heritage character area.	✓
NPPF	Para 96	Healthy communities	Sauna, gym and wellness uses directly contribute to community health and wellbeing objectives.	✓
Local Plan	Policy 1	Sustainable development	Economic growth, community wellbeing and sustainable town centre vitality all supported.	✓
Local Plan	Policy 5	Economy & employment	Affordable workspaces supporting Worthing's creative and hybrid-worker economy growth.	✓
Local Plan	Policy 10	Town centre viability	Café, gym and social uses increase footfall and dwell time, complementing retail.	✓
Local Plan	Policy 15	Design & heritage	Material palette references local vernacular. No listed buildings on site. Minimal heritage impact.	✓
Local Plan	Policy 20	Open space & wellbeing	Sauna, gym and activated courtyard contribute to public health objectives.	✓
WBC Strategy	Town of Culture	Cultural infrastructure	Permanent creative hub directly supports Worthing's UK Town of Culture 2028 ambition.	✓
SPD	Parking	Car-free development	Town centre location with excellent public transport access promotes car-free approach while also providing sufficient car park spaces for compliance	✓

UPPER CENTRAL



IN CONCLUSION

Upper Central represents a genuinely transformative, community-led proposal for Worthing — one that directly responds to the town's most pressing needs and greatest opportunities.

Repurposed shipping containers at 24 Upper High Street will create a vibrant, permanent hub combining affordable offices, art studios, a community sauna, café and gym — arranged around an activated courtyard at the heart of the town centre.

The development will create 30+ local jobs and 40+ affordable workspaces, fill a critical gap in Worthing's creative infrastructure, and provide a meaningful third space — anchored by the town's first community sauna — that is open, inclusive and welcoming to all.

Built from reclaimed containers, powered by solar PV and finished in sustainable and reclaimed materials, Upper Central places environmental responsibility at its core.

It directly supports Worthing Borough Council's ambition to achieve the UK Town of Culture 2028 designation — and makes the case that Worthing is ready.

We respectfully invite Worthing Borough Council to support this application.

Upper Central | 24 Upper High Street, Worthing