

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0091/26

Recommendation: – Approve

Site: Sussex Travel Clinic 23 Farncombe Road Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Change of use from medical services (Class Ee) to a SEND school (Class F1a)

Last visited: 06.01.2026

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified: N Site notice posted 10.02.2026

Site and Surroundings

The application site is located on the west side of Farncombe Road, to the south of its junction with Lyndhurst Road. It contains a two storey building with single storey addition at the rear. A flat roofed single storey building abuts at the rear but is outside of the site boundary and appears to be part of No.21. Fencing to the south side of the building separates the site from the neighbouring 1960's office block and parking area. There is a hardstanding for parking to the site frontage with low wall separating it from No.25A to the north. It is understood that the building has been in commercial use since the 1980's, and from 2013 until recently has been in use by 'City Doc' which is a vaccination clinic.

The site is within the Farncombe Road Conservation Area and is identified as a Local Interest Building. There are no Tree Preservation Orders relevant to this specific site. The site is identified as potentially contaminated land. The site is within a Key Office Location where policy DM11 applies.

Proposal

Permission is sought for the change of use from medical services (Class Ee) to a SEND school (class F1a). The proposed facilities would include three classrooms, two wc's, a staffroom and office.

A supporting statement has been provided which describes the proposal as follows:

This Planning Statement details the proposed change of use of 23 Farncombe Road from Class E (commercial, business and service) to Class F1(a) (education) to allow Cay College CIC to provide additional educational spaces for 10 to 14 year olds with special educational needs primarily from Worthing but also from Sussex.

It is proposed to accommodate a maximum of 15 students and 6 staff at the premises during normal education hours Monday to Friday following the West Sussex school calendar – 39 weeks per year.

The statement confirms that students arrive between 9.30am and 10am and leave between 2.30 to 3pm.

The applicant has provided further clarification on the operation of the proposed use.

Attendance:

Students will attend up to 15 hours per week (this is set by West Sussex County Council) on individual timetables that will vary per student. We are planning on a maximum of 12 students at any one time. Students will be present between 10am and 3pm.

Break times:

Break times are between sessions and a 30 minute lunchtime that will take place supervised in the building or at the beach/local park depending on the weather.

Access to outdoor space:

We will be having supervised visits to Worthing Leisure centre, our allotment, the beach and the local park.

There is a hardstanding and vehicular access to the frontage which would remain for staff parking purposes. No external alterations are proposed.

Relevant Planning History:

90/05197/FULL - REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING TRANSLUCENT ROOF AT REAR WITH FLAT FELT ROOF, 2 NO. ROOF LIGHTS LOWER THAN EXISTING ROOF AND INTERNAL ALTERATIONS

STATUS: Conditional Consent 20th August 1990.

08/1127/FULL - Proposed conversion of office building to provide three self contained flats.

STATUS: Conditional Consent 9th January 2009.

08/1127/FULL/COND1 - Approval of details pursuant to conditions 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 of WB/08/1127/FULL.

STATUS: 7th October 2009.

09/0980/FULL - Proposed conversion of office building to provide 2 No. self contained flats.

STATUS: Conditional Consent 23rd December 2009.

09/1090/FULL - Change of use from office (class B1) to Dentist Surgery (class D1).

STATUS: Conditional Consent 18th February 2010.

AWDM/0071/12 - Installation of new oil tank replacing temporary tank, enclosed by palisade fencing in the position of parking bays 58 & 59 in existing car park, to the southwest of the building.

STATUS: Application Permitted 26th March 2012.

AWDM/1105/14 - Advertisement consent for pole mounted sign on front boundary.

STATUS: Application Permitted 7th October 2014.

WB/1044/84 - Change of use from residential to offices

STATUS: Application Permitted 22nd January 1985.

NOTICE/0023/25 - Application for Prior Approval for Proposed Change of use from Commercial, Business and Service (Use Class E) to form one residential unit (Use Class C3)

STATUS: Prior Approval Required and Granted 8th January 2026.

Consultations

The **Highway Authority** has made the following comments:

The proposal is for the change of use from a travel clinic to a SEND school for up to 15 children (10-14 yrs). Children will arrive between 9:30 and 10:00 and will leave between 2:30 and 3:00 which is outside of peak hours. A total of 6 staff will be required and the site will operate in term only (39 weeks).

Parking for 3 vehicles is available which will be reserved for full time staff. Other staff members will park at the Ivyarch Road premises.

It is proposed for children to be dropped off at the school by private car or taxi with no requirement for extended parking. On street parking is available along Farncombe Road with some restrictions to allow for Permit holder parking.

Although not included within the response speeds of vehicles using Farncombe Road are likely to be low given the alignment of the road, vertical features (trees) and on street parking.

Children will not arrive at the same time as the start/finish windows cover a period of 30 minutes. In addition the start and finish times are outside of peak times.

No highway objection

The **Worthing Society** has commented as follows:

Thank you for requesting our comments in respect of the above application, which relates to a 'change of use'.

This distinctive building has a flint façade, is recorded on the Councils Local Interest List and situated within the Farncombe Road Conservation Area. There is 'group value' with the adjacent Victorian building, run by St John's Ambulance, which is also on the Local Interest List.

I have now had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with our Heritage Team. We have noted the comments of other Consultees and the fact that, in accordance with Policy DM 24 of the Worthing Local Plan, no changes will be made which could adversely affect the conservation area.

In summary, I am pleased to advise you that the Society has no objection to this application.

Ofsted – no comments received

The Council's **Environmental Health Officer** has confirmed no adverse comments.

The Council's **Safety and Resilience Manager** has commented as follows:

The location sits outside of flood zones 2 and 3 and therefore I have no objections to the proposal from an emergency planning perspective.

Representations

None received.

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023):

SP1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)

SS1 (Spatial Strategy)

DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment)

DM8 (Planning for Sustainable Communities/Community Facilities)

DM11 (Protecting and Enhancing Employment Sites)

DM15 (Sustainable Transport and Active Travel)

DM16 (Sustainable Design)

DM20 (Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage)

DM22 (Pollution)

National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment:

Principle of Development

The site is located within a key office location where employment uses are protected against loss of other uses. Policy DM11 states that these key employment areas are essential in maintaining a strong and diverse supply of employment sites and premises to meet the needs of the local economy and, given the significant land constraints, the Council are seeking to protect them for employment uses appropriate to their location. Only in exceptional circumstances, where there is clear and robust evidence that the introduction of alternative uses is required to retain a diverse and resilient local economy, will such a change be considered.

However the existing use of the building as a vaccination clinic does not fall within the protected 'employment uses' as defined in paragraph 5.154 of the local plan and therefore the proposal would not represent any loss of employment use. The impact of the proposed use on the functioning of neighbouring employment sites is not considered to cause any significant negative impact given the scale and nature of the

proposals and in the context of the existing medical services use and surrounding uses.

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.

Policy DM8 states that:

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.

b) The provision of multi-purpose facilities and the sharing or extended use of facilities that can be accessed by the wider community will be encouraged.

c) The Council will work with service providers to deliver appropriate facilities in accessible locations. Proposals by service providers for the delivery of facilities in appropriate locations to meet the needs generated by new development and existing communities will be supported in principle.

d) The Council will seek planning obligations to secure new and improved community facilities and services to mitigate the impact of developments.

The Council may also fund improvements to community facilities using receipts from the Community Infrastructure Levy.

e) Development which would result in the loss of community facilities will normally be resisted and will only be permitted where:

i) an accessible replacement facility of a similar nature is provided that meets the needs of its current and intended users, as well as the local community; or

ii) it can be demonstrated that the existing premises are no longer required or viable in their current use and the premises have been appropriately marketed for an alternative community use.

The following supporting information has been provided in relation to the proposed use:

2.1 Cay College is a not for profit community interest company (Registered Number 14962612) providing high quality education for students with special educational needs. Many of the young people have not attended school or college for long periods – Cay aim is to get them back into education, provide them with life skills and employment skills for them to be able to lead independent lives. With the majority of students we are achieving over 90% attendance. Our employment skills programme targets the type of employment most suited to our students, particularly modern skills such as pod casting and media editing, digital music production and will bring modern skills to Worthing.

2.2 Cay College commenced in 2024 and is based at Axtex House, IvyArch Road in Worthing. Worthing Council granted planning permission for the change of use at these premises to allow the college to be established.

2.3 West Sussex County Council stated in November 2025 they were expecting a 20% increase during 2026 in students with special educational needs requiring placement at independent providers such as Cay College. Axtex House is unable to accommodate more students. We have identified 23 Farncombe Road as a suitable property to expand our operations, specifically to house up to 15 students aged 10 to 14.

The applicant's supporting statement outlines an increasing need for placements at independent providers and the proposal at this site would allow the college, which is based at Axtex House in Ivy Arch Road, to expand their provision. In this case the school offers a specialised education service to meet the needs of students with special education needs across Worthing and the wider area and would represent an alternative community use to the former vaccination clinic, and as such can be supported in principle.

Visual Amenity and impact on the Conservation Area

No external alterations are proposed to the building. The change of use to an alternative community use would not have any significant impact on the character of the building or wider conservation area.

Residential Amenity

The site is within an area comprising of predominantly residential uses with some commercial uses in the vicinity including the neighbouring offices to the south and west of the site and the St Johns Ambulance site to the north. There is an adjoining dwelling to the north at No.25A.

The proposed school would be in operation during daytime hours with a maximum of 15 students (10-14 year olds) in attendance between 10am and 3pm Monday to Friday during term time and with up to 6 staff employed.

No outdoor amenity space is proposed for students and further information has been provided to clarify that access to outdoor space would be via supervised visits to the school's allotment, local parks, beach or other external amenities. Supervised break times and lunch times would take place within the building or through visits to the beach or local parks where weather permits.

Although there are residential uses within the vicinity of the site, including an adjoining dwelling to the north at No.25A, daytime hours of use would be reasonable and the number of children is limited to 15. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has clarified that Building Regulations requirements on sound insulation would be sufficient to ensure no significant loss of amenity to adjoining properties.

Whilst there are likely to be additional traffic movements associated with the proposed use, particularly during drop-off and pick up times, given the scale of the use

proposed and surrounding character of the area it is considered that this would not give rise to any significant disturbance to neighbouring occupiers.

The number of students can be limited to 15 in the interests of highways safety and protecting amenity and wider hours of operation can be specified by condition to ensure daytime weekday hours are controlled.

On the basis of the details outlined, and in the absence of any objection from the Council's Environmental Health Officer it is considered that the intensity and nature of the use of the property proposed would not cause any significant detrimental impact to the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. The specific use as a SEND school as outlined in the supporting statement can be controlled by condition to allow further control over future changes of use within F1 in the interests of amenity.

Highways and Access

The site is in a sustainable location, well connected to town centre facilities and services and public transport connections to the wider area.

The supporting statement indicates that the front forecourt would continue to be used for car parking which uses an existing vehicular crossover. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the proposals on parking or highway safety grounds. Cycling is a viable option in the area and a condition is recommended to secure cycle parking to encourage alternative modes of transport and help minimise transport impacts.

Recommendation:

APPROVE subject to condition(s):-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Use limited to SEND school as outlined in the Planning Statement and no other purpose within F1
4. Student numbers limited to 15 at any one time
5. Hours of operation limited to between 08.00 and 18.00 Monday to Friday
6. Cycle parking details to be agreed and implemented

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.

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

Case Officer: Rebekah Hincke
Authorised by: Louise Prew

Date: 23.03.2026
Date: 24/03/2026