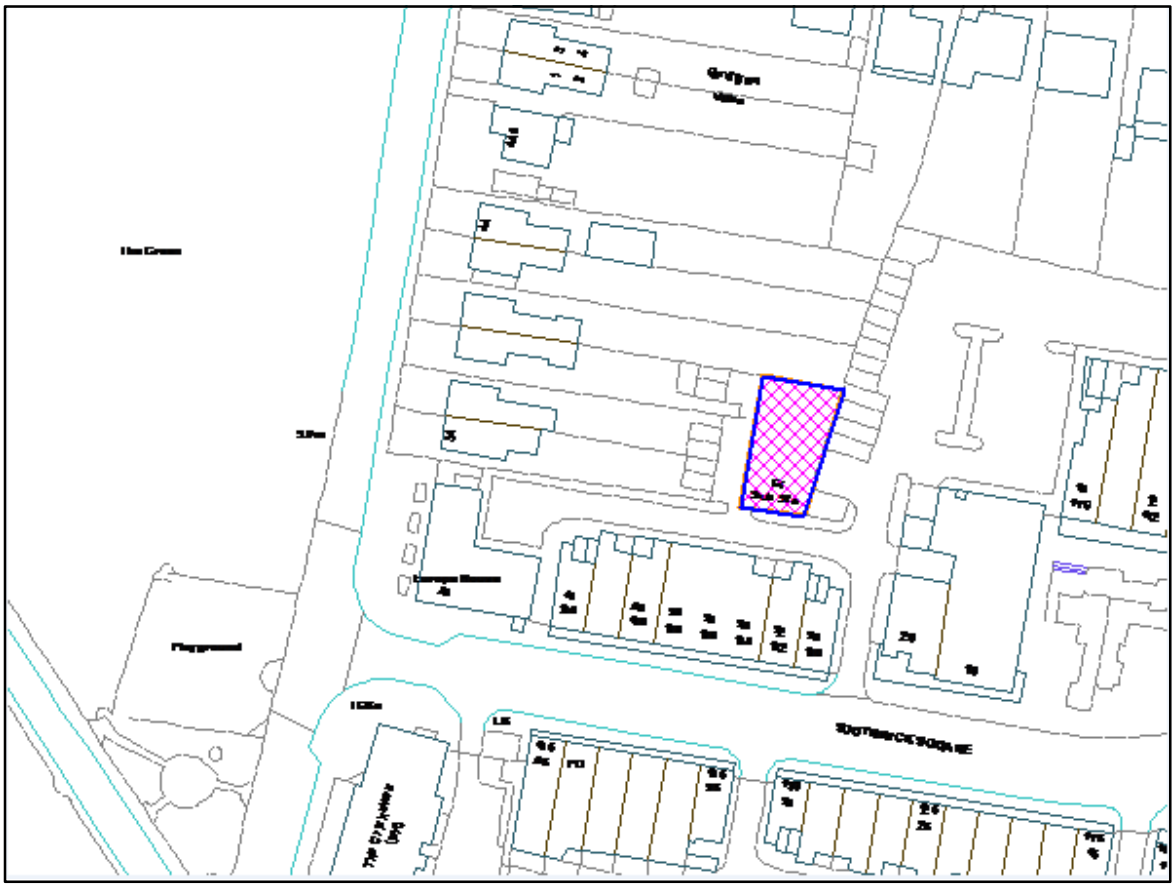
Application Number: AWDM/1229/16 **Recommendation – GRANT temporary permission**

Site: **Europa House, 46 - 50 Southwick Square, Southwick**

Proposal: **Prefabricated temporary office building in car park**

Applicant: Mr R Gilbert Ward: Southwick Green
Case Officer: Gary Peck



Not to Scale

Reproduced from OS Mapping with the permission of HMSO © Crown Copyright Licence number LA100024321

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

This application seeks full permission for the siting of a temporary office building in an existing car park to the east of Europa House which is situated to the rear of 34-38 Southwick Green and to the north of numbers 30-44 & 130-144 Southwick Square.

The proposed building would be single storey, flat roofed and contain windows in its eastern elevation only. It would be just over 20 metres in width and 7 metres in depth with a height of 3 metres. It is understood that the building would be required for a period of 2 years.

The application site is within the Conservation Area, the boundary of which is immediately to the south and east. The proposed building would be located on the western side of the car park. The site is part bordered on the eastern side by flat roofed garaging sitting on the western edge of the main car park serving Southwick Square. To the north is flint wall topped by a close boarded fence and trees/shrubbery beyond providing an effective screen to the long rear garden of 40 Southwick Square. To the west are flat roofed garages serving properties in Southwick Green, in part divided by a low part brick/flint wall. There is a slight rise in levels to the north. Residential properties are beyond, about 40 metres distant from the site.

The application site is accessed from the south, beyond which is a 3 storey block containing residential properties facing the site and on the ground floor, retail premises fronting Southwick Square.

A container has been placed on the site within the last year, although neither planning permission nor landowner consent appears to have been agreed for its siting.

Relevant Planning History

None considered directly relevant to the determination of the application.

Consultations

Estates section

I can confirm that the proposed site for the temporary office falls within the Adur District Council freehold at Southwick Square. The land is however subject to rights of access granted to the neighbouring residents' properties. It appears that the proposed office would interfere with these rights of access and this is being checked through with Legal Services.

An agreement to allow this proposal to go ahead would therefore require amendments to be made to the applicant's lease of the car park and the further agreement of the residents.

Please note that a temporary storage container has already been placed on site, in breach of the tenant's lease and without the landlord's consent.

West Sussex County Council Highways

The proposal to erect a pre-fabricated office block for 20-30 staff at Europa House, Southwick, has been considered by WSCC as the Local Highway Authority. No objection is raised in principle however more information is required.

The office block will provide additional office accommodation for 20-30 staff. Will these staff be additional to the existing work pool? How many car parking spaces will be taken up with the office block and are there any plans to provide displaced parking elsewhere on the site?

How long will the office block be in situ for, and why is it needed? If the temporary office is being used to house existing employees then it is assumed that no additional trips will be made to the site. If the site will be accommodating more staff then their parking needs have to be considered.

The installation of the office block will need access to the rear of the building and a construction management plan would need to be submitted outlining the delivery phase, including the site set up and the route the delivery vehicle will take.

In response to the above comments, the applicant responded in italics below:

The office block will provide additional office accommodation for 20-30 staff. Will these staff be additional to the existing work pool?

The space will be used by current staff and new staff in order to enable expansion throughout the company.

How many car parking spaces will be taken up with the office block and are there any plans to provide displaced parking elsewhere on the site?

There are 8 parking spaces, we have no plans other than to allow people to park in the pay and display car park behind the Co-op which has never been more than half full. Staff can also park in the surrounding on street area in Southwick.

How long will the office block be in situ for, and why is it needed?

We are planning to move to a larger office in Shoreham, we are currently in discussion with the Council regarding this building as we are rapidly growing as a company and require additional space. Currently, we aim to be in the new building in 2 years' time, once we have moved we will remove the pre-fabricated building.

The installation of the office block will need access to the rear of the building and a construction management plan would need to be submitted outlining the delivery phase, including the site set up and the route the delivery vehicle will take.

The pre-fabricated building is modular and so will come in smaller pieces to be put together on site, leading to little disruption from a large building/vehicle being delivered in one bulk load. In order to complete a construction management plan we would need to be assured that the planning permission has been granted as we are still waiting to choose the company to use for this building. It would also not be cost effective for us to get this commissioned without having the granted approval.

Further comments from the County Council are awaited and will be reported to the Committee verbally.

Representations

None received.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AB4, AB17

National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012)

Planning Practice Guidance (CLG 2014)

Relevant Legislation

The Committee should consider the planning application in accordance with:

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) that provides the application may be granted either unconditionally or subject to relevant conditions, or refused. Regard shall be given to relevant development plan policies, any relevant local finance considerations, and other material considerations.

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that requires the decision to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning Assessment

The main issues in the determination of this application are the effects of the proposal upon the character of the area and amenities of neighbouring properties having regard to the operational requirements of the business.

Prior to the submission of this application, a site visit was held which included viewing the existing office at Europa House. It is readily apparent that the occupiers of the building, Focus Group, are in urgent need of additional space, the existing office appearing full to capacity. It is understood that the Company began as a home business, expanded rapidly to around 40 staff in premises in Hove which necessitated a

move to the larger premises at Europa House. Since locating in Southwick, the Company has doubled its numbers of staff again and has been in talks with the Council in respect of relocating within the District. Pending those discussions, and in view of the lack of suitable and available office space in the District, this application has been made to provide temporary office space in the interim as the Company continues to expand.

The National Planning Policy Framework states '*significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system'* and this objective is emphasised throughout the guidance. It is not considered, therefore, that there are any objections in principle to the proposal.

Notwithstanding the above, though, the application site is within the Conservation Area and the Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance the qualities of the Conservation Area. It is noted that the application site is located on the very edge of the Southwick Green Conservation Area, the boundary of which is drawn immediately to the south and east of the application site. It is arguably surprising that the application site has been included within the Conservation Area given its intrinsic quality is quite limited containing of a hard surface area, 6 flat roofed garages and a container (albeit unauthorised but about which no previous complaints had been reported to the Council). The immediately surrounding area is dominated to the south by the rear of the blocks which front Southwick Square with external staircases rear servicing requirements and general external storage while to the east is a substation topped with spiked deterrent fencing (the container currently partly obscures this), recycling containers and flat roofed garaging. As such, therefore, your Officers do not feel in visual terms that the proposal would adversely affect the Conservation Area to a detriment that would warrant refusal, given that the building is required for a temporary period only.

In terms of residential amenity, the properties to the north and west are either sufficiently distant or well screened for there to be no adviser material impact. The residential properties to the south are much closer but the character of the area is such that there is already an extent of disturbance – the site itself is used as a car park and the access road which serves the application site as well as the rear of the units in Southwick Square as well as Europa House itself appears well used and evidently by larger vehicles than is suitable for the width of the road. It is not considered that use of a building as an office would cause material harm, therefore.

The County Council while not raising objection on highways grounds have raised some objections to which the applicant has responded. A final response is awaited from the County Council prior to the meeting. However, it should be remembered that the site is in a very sustainable location being located close to the railway station and bus routes and therefore even with an increase in staff, it would be unlikely that any transport impacts would be 'severe' (as required by the National Planning Policy Framework to resist an application solely on such grounds).

The remaining issues relate to those outlined by the Estates section and it is important to emphasise that these matters need to be resolved separately from the planning application. This relates to not only the Council's interests as landowner, but also the access rights of residents of Southwick Green whose garages are to the western side of the garden. The County Council has not raised any concern regarding the turning within the site and it appears that the width of the site is sufficient that residents will still be able to access their garages acceptably (there is about 9 metres at the closest point between the edge of the office building and the garages to the west). However, the residents may still benefit from a right of way over the application site and the terms of the lease between the Council as landowner and applicant need to be resolved. This does not preclude a decision on the planning application but if a positive decision is made it should be noted that this does not affect the civil or legal issues which will still need to be resolved.

Recommendation

To GRANT planning permission for a temporary period of 2 years.

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Temporary Permission
2. Materials
3. Hours of Use

and any further conditions suggested by consultees.

3rd October 2016