Expiry Date - 18/07/2023

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0733/23 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: The Lime Tree Surgery Lime Tree Avenue Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Change of use from administration offices/rooms linked to Lime Tree Surgery, to new dental practice.

Date of site visit: 07.06.2023

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: Y – revised 'red line- on site location plan (21 days)

Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a detached chalet dwelling (formerly 8 Coombe Rise) currently part of the Lime Tree Surgery which occupies an L-shaped site on the south side of Lime Tree Avenue close to its junction with Coombe Rise. Lime Tree Surgery consists of a complex of inter-linked buildings including a purpose-built surgery building dating from the late 1980s, link- attached to the adjoining former dwelling houses (6 and 8 Coombe Rise) to the east. An access drive running parallel to the west side of the purpose-built surgery building leads to a large rear car park that extends westward past the rear of the adjoining library building up to the rear of the public conveniences fronting Findon Road, and eastward to the rear of 6 and 8 Coombe Rise. The surgery use expanded into the neighbouring former residential dwellings, first 6 Coombe Rise in the mid-1990s, and then 8 Coombe Rise in 2006. Both former Nos.6 and 8 have retained their domestic residential character and appearance viewed from Coombe Rise. Former No.8 has been enlarged by an extension over 2 floors on its west side and by a large rear conservatory. There is a driveway in front with vehicle access from Coombe Rise with the remainder of the front garden enclosed by perimeter shrub planting.

The site and surrounding land slopes down to the west and south.

Two trees, a Norway Maple on the site frontage, and a Copper Beech tree in the rear garden (straddling the site boundary with former No.6) are subject to TPO No.96 of 2001.

Both Lime Tree Avenue and Coombe Rise are residential in character, made up of a mix of detached dwellings occupying good-sized plots, consisting mostly of chalet houses and bungalows interspersed with some 2-storey houses.

Proposal

Expiry Date - 18/07/2023

Full planning permission is sought for a change of use to a dental practice. No external alterations are proposed. Permission is required in this case due to the restrictive condition on the planning permission granted in 2006 (see Planning History below).

The submitted plans show 4no surgeries (2no on the ground-floor and 2no on the first-floor) with associated reception/waiting rooms, staff and patients WCs, decontamination room, staff room and kitchen.

The proposed hours of use would be 0800-2000hrs Monday to Friday, and 0800 to 1600hrs on Saturdays.

Five parking spaces in the existing rear Lime Tree Surgery car park would be allocated for use by the proposed dental surgery. There are 2 existing 'tandem' parking spaces on the drive in front of the property.

A Planning Statement submitted in support of the application states:-

"This planning application seeks the Change of Use of a property currently linked to the Lime Tree Surgery. The property in question was known as 8 Coombe Rise until it was granted approval under previous application WB/06/0071/FULL, to be extended and incorporated into the Doctor's Clinic and used as administration and medical consultation space to support the established surgery.

It is important to clarify that the rooms proposed for this Change of Use are not used as operational doctors surgeries. There will be no loss to any essential patient facilities due to this application. The rooms proposed for change are purely used as administrative spaces and due to the relocation of the administrative services to Durrington, these rooms are now vacant.

Due to this application a much needed, essential service will be created as it is now requested to Change the Use of the building into a 4 surgery Dental Practice, thus offering essential facilities to the surrounding community and local area.

Our proposal makes no changes to the building's structure or external façade. No layout or structural changes are proposed to the internals of the building. The existing rooms will simply be repurposed to provide 4no. dental surgeries and the supporting facilities required.

The property has 2no. off-road parking spaces to the front of the property and also benefits from 5 private car parking spaces which have been allocated in the main, private staff carpark of the Lime Tree Surgery. Patients and staff can also easily catch the bus, walk or cycle to the clinic which will be located conveniently beside the local doctors surgery, library and parade of shops.

The clinic will provide a much needed local facility in a prime location beside the established local Doctors Surgery as there is no longer a dental clinic in Findon, catering for the demographic needs in the region.

The reuse of this space as a Dental Practice will allow the opportunity for patients to make one journey to visit their doctor and dentist, thus reducing carbon footprint and utilising existing transport links such as the main Green Bus routes which run locally.

We are happy to provide a supporting letter from one of the Managing Partners of the Lime Tree Surgery and trust that locals, planning officers and council members alike can see the benefits that this Change of Use will provide to the local area."

The application is accompanied by a letter of support from one of the Managing Partners of Lime Tree Surgery stating:-

"*I am writing to support the application for planning permission, allowing the creation of a 4 surgery dental practice at number 8 Coombe Rise, Findon Valley.*

As you will be aware, there is currently limited dental service available to residents of Findon Valley, Findon Village and High Salvington. The co-location of dental services alongside our exisiting GP service and the pharmacy would allow for close collaboration between the 3 primary care partners, ensuring that patients would be able to access the most appropriate primary care service for their need whilst also ensuring that the professional teams can closely liaise to provide the highest standard of care.

The integration of Primary care services are a cornerstone of the vision set out in the Hewitt Report published on the 4th April 2023 and the co-location of GP, pharmacy and dental services is entirely in line with this vision. It is a realistic possibility that without the successful appointment of a tenant to the space in number 8 Coombe Rise that the Partnership will need to explore the possibility of returning the property to residential use, and in all likelihood disposing of the asset. Importantly the property boundary currently incorporate the existing staff car park, which would necessarily be lost as part of any disposal, likely resulting in increased parking pressure on Coombe Rise and Lime Tree Avenue.

I would therefore urge our valued colleagues at Adur & Worthing Council to do all that they can to ensure that this scheme is given the permissions that it needs."

Relevant Planning History:

WB/06/0071/FULL Change of use of residential dwelling and erection of a two storey side extension for administration and medical consultation use in connection with Lime Tree Surgery. Condition 2 of the planning permission restricts the use of the property to ancillary accommodation to the Lime Tree

Surgery including administration and storage space, a staff room and a health visitor and district nurse room.

Consultations:

West Sussex County Council: The Local Highway Authority initially commented as follows:-

"*This application is for the change of use from administration offices/rooms linked to Lime Tree Surgery to new dental practice. The site is located on Lime Tree Avenue, an unclassified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 mph.*

Following an inspection of the application documents, WSCC in its role as Local Highway Authority (LHA) requests more information from the applicant.

The application form states that seven existing parking spaces are to be retained. Can the applicant demonstrate this existing vehicular parking provision on a site plan, and also specify how these will be allocated to staff and/or visitors.

Please raise the above with the applicant and re-consult. Upon receiving this information, the LHA can assess the application further."

Following the receipt of an amended block plan and site location plan with an amended 'red line' to include access to the rear parking spaces from the public highway. The LHA has commented:-

"*WSCC in its role as Local Highway Authority (LHA) previously provided comment on this application, dated 13/06/2023, requesting more information relating to the vehicular parking provision. The applicant has supplied the requested information and as such, the LHA has been re-consulted and can provide the following updated comments.*

Existing accesses from Lime Tree Avenue are to be retained for this development, with no alterations proposed. The LHA does not anticipate that the proposals would give rise to a significant material intensification of movements over that of the existing use.

Seven car parking spaces are to be retained – two to the front and five to the rear of the site. Given the anticipated numbers of staff, five parking spaces will be utilised by staff, with the remaining two for visitors. The applicant anticipates that no more than four patients would be present at the site at any given time, and this seems a reasonable assessment given the scale of the proposals. Any overspill parking linked to the surgery would have to be accommodated on-street, although the LHA does not anticipate that this would give rise to a highway safety concern or parking capacity issue in this instance.

The proposed surgery is well sited for visitors to use alternative and sustainable forms of transport, with regular bus services available from nearby Findon Road. Cycling is a viable option in the area, and the applicant is advised to consider implementing cycle parking provision to further promote their use.

In summary, the LHA does not consider that this 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 111), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal."

Southern Water

Southern Water requires a formal application for a connection to the public sewer to be made by the applicant or developer.

In situation where surface water is being considered for discharge to the Southern Water network it is required that the below hierarchy for surface water be followed as reflected in part H3 of the Building Regulations.

It is possible a sewer now deemed to be public may be crossing the development site. Should any sewer be found during construction works an investigation of the sewer will be required to ascertain its ownership before any further works commence on site.

Adur and Worthing Councils:

The **EHO (Public Health)** has no comment.

Representations:

A representation has been received from a nearby resident in Coombe Rise commenting that whilst a dental practice is supported there are real reservations about the amount of extra traffic and parking that would be generated in this residential area. Over the last few years the amount of road parking and in Coombe Rise and Lime Tree Avenue has increased considerably. Much of it by staff at the surgery and adjoining pharmacy and the remainder from the many patients using these facilities. Whilst understanding there will be some parking at the rear of the property this is already insufficient and will not be enough to improve the situation. Monitoring of the existing road parking should be undertaken at varying times during the weekday working hours as the change of use will most certainly increase the parking congestion in the area. Possibly this could be rectified with time restricted parking to prevent parking of the roads all day.

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, SP3, DM5, DM8, DM15
National Planning Policy Framework (HCLG 2021)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment

A strategic objective of the Local Plan is to promote health and wellbeing and address health inequalities including access to health care facilities. To this end Policy SP3(b) states that the Council will support proposals for new and improved health services and facilities in locations where they can be accessed by sustainable transport modes;

Policy DM8 states that 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. It states that 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.

The information submitted in support of the application has explained that this building is no longer required by the Lime Tree Surgery and that the administrative staff that previously occupied the building have already relocated to the surgery's Durrington site. The proposed use by a dental surgery would retain a health-related use in accordance with Policy DM8 which seeks to resist the loss of existing community facilities.

Consequently, there is no objection in principle to the proposed use. A condition of planning permission would be pertinent to limit the use of the premises to Class E(e) for the provision of medical or health services. As no external changes are proposed the key considerations are the effects on residential amenity and on highway safety.

The TPO trees will not be affected.

Residential Amenity

The most affected property is 10 Coombe Rise, adjoining the site to the East. It consists of a detached chalet-style house similar in original design and appearance to No.8, occupying a good sized plot that extends alongside the existing rear car park serving the surgery. The property has been extended at the rear by a deep single-storey rear extension. Ground-floor windows in the west side of the original dwelling and extension appear secondary in nature. There are no windows in the first-floor west elevation.

Although the former No.8 Coombe Rise has been used in connection with the surgery since permission in 2006, its use has largely been limited to administration and storage. Although it is not anticipated the use as a dental surgery would itself generate excessive noise (e.g. equipment), it can reasonably be expected that the intensity of the proposed use will generate additional activity compared to the former use, with patients coming and going throughout the working day. Near neighbours will be aware of this additional activity, but it is not considered this would be likely to cause unacceptable

noise and disturbance. Patients should enter the surgery from the street entrance (and not from the rear car park) to avoid introducing additional activity adjacent to the boundary with the rear garden of No.10. That said, the front and rear parking areas are already in existence and a grassed margin physically separates the rear car park from the boundary with No.10 with trees and shrubs growing close to the boundary providing a degree of visual separation.

As proposed the dental surgery would be open until 20.00hrs in the evening Mon-Fri (and 16.00hrs on Saturdays). Although the EHO has not raised any objection, it is considered an earlier closing of 1800hrs would be more appropriate in the context of this residential setting, and would coincide with the closing times of the neighbouring surgery and pharmacy.

Subject to the above-mentioned suggested controls it is considered there would be no adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Highway Safety

At the time of the officer site visit (early afternoon, midweek) the car park was full with heavy on-street parking along Lime Tree Avenue and Coombe Rise.

No additional floor space is proposed but it can reasonably be expected that the more intensive use of the property as a dental surgery will generate additional vehicle movements and demand for parking than the previous ancillary use of the building.

The tandem layout of the 2 parking spaces on the site frontage does not lend itself to use by patients and will likely be used by staff working at the property all day.

The five parking spaces in the rear car park included within the application site are located at the far eastern end and are currently marked on the ground as ‘doctors only’. They will continue to be accessed from the adjacent open car park and the existing access from Lime Tree Avenue. In the absence of new markings or signage it is likely that the whole of the existing car park will be shared by patients and/or staff visiting the surgery, pharmacy or dental practice on a ‘first come first served’ basis. The LHA has not raised any objection or sought to impose any controls over the allocation of parking spaces. Whilst it is recognised that any parking overspill would need to be accommodated on-street it is noted that no more than four patients would be present at the site at any given time, and the LHA is satisfied that additional on-street parking generated by the development would not give rise to a highway safety concern or parking capacity issue in this instance.

Weight is also given in this regard to the sustainable location of the site in proximity to the bus route along Findon Road. Thus, whilst the valid concerns of the third party in relation to on-street parking are noted, it is not considered there would be highway safety grounds to justify refusal of the application.

Expiry Date - 18/07/2023

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. 3yr time limit
3. Hours of use between 0800 and 1800hrs Mon-Fri 0800 and 1600 Sat
4. Limit use to Class E(e) health and medical use
5. Patients to enter building from street frontage
6. No external plant

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? Y

Case Officer:	Jo Morin	Date: 7 August 2023
Authorised by:	Gary Peck	Date: 7 August 2023