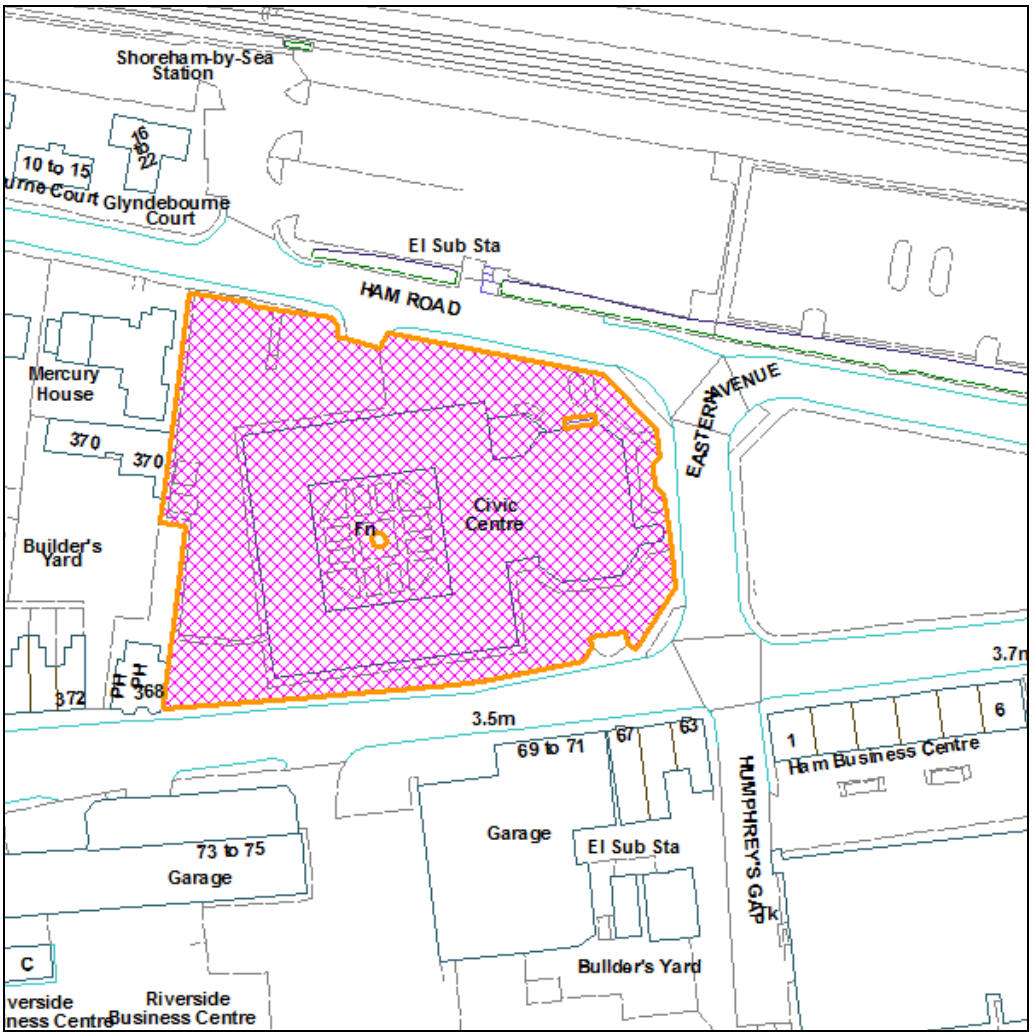
Application Number: AWDM/0272/20 **Recommendation: APPROVE**

Site: **Land East of 1 To 11 Mercury House, Ham Road, Shoreham-By-Sea (former Adur Civic Centre site)**

Proposal: **Retrospective application for the temporary change of use of land for overflow staff car parking**

Applicant: Ms Charlotte Pook, Focus 4 U Limited
Ward: St Mary's
Case Officer: Gary Peck



Not to Scale

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Proposal

This application seeks retrospective permission for the temporary change of use of the now cleared Civic Centre site for overflow staff car parking to serve Focus after the opening of their office across Ham Road to the north. It is stated on the application form that the use is proposed for 40 vehicles, but as the spaces are not marked and due to the size of the site, the site would appear capable of accommodating a greater number of vehicles.

The application is retrospective, the site having been used for parking since August last year. Although a lease was agreed with the Council's Estates section, planning permission was not sought at the time.

Site & Surroundings

The application site comprises the vacant former Civic Centre site which is currently surrounded by hoardings with an access gate and entrance to Ham Road. Across the road to the north is the new Focus office development where the remainder of the car parking to serve the company is provided. A small block of flats, Mercury House, is to the west.

Relevant Planning History

There is no relevant history in respect of the application site itself. Planning permission was granted in 2017 for the erection of a 4 storey office block on the site of the former car park serving the Civic Centre to the north and the following the completion of the development, the office block opened last year. The development includes 70 car parking spaces and at the time of the previous application, it was understood that the company employed 200 people, although it is understood to have expanded since. The permission was subject to a condition requiring a Travel Plan seeking to promote alternative modes of transport, which was also subject to a review once the building was operational. The review process is currently taking place with the County Council as the Highways Authority.

Consultations

West Sussex Highways

No objection is raised to the temporary use of the land for overflow staff car parking. The parking spaces being utilised are a lower number than those previously provided on the site.

Representations

No comments received

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adur Local Plan 2017:

Policy 11: Shoreham-by-Sea, Policy 15: Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm, Policy 25: Protecting and Enhancing Existing Employment Sites and Premises, Policy 28: Transport and Connectivity Policy 29: Delivering Infrastructure Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2019)

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 issue in the determination of the application is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

The Civic Centre building was demolished in 2017 and up until the use of the site for the current purpose in late summer of 2019 was vacant. While the Council is actively seeking the redevelopment of the site, there is no current planning application for such redevelopment and so it can be assumed that any further use of the site is a number of months away. In the meantime, the former Civic Centre car park site has been developed and is now occupied by Focus. In itself, therefore, the use of a vacant site by an immediately adjoining occupier appears to be a sensible use of the land and given it is surrounded by hoardings at present, and will be so until the site is developed, the proposal has little visual impact. There is an adequate existing access to the site and, as stated by the County Council, the number of vehicles using the site is less than was the case when the Civic Centre was operational, and accordingly there is no objection on highways grounds either.

As such, therefore, the application itself is quite straightforward. There is a wider concern, however, that the proposal has proven necessary as it was evident that when the office building opened, there was considerable additional pressure on surrounding

roads, where parking is largely unrestricted, despite the proximity of the site to both the railways station and regularly serviced bus routes.

Focus is a very successful local employer and it would seem likely that when the use of the current site ceases, pressure on local parking will occur again. It is essential, therefore, that during this period where additional off road parking is available the robustness of the company Travel Plan is further improved to take ensure that the alternative transport modes close to the site are used as extensively as possible.

In this respect, a temporary planning permission is considered appropriate, not only to avoid prejudicing the future redevelopment of the site (although this is in the Council's control anyway as landowner) but also to ensure that by the time of the expiry of the permission, sufficient progress has been made to ensure that a robust Travel Plan is in place.

Recommendation

To GRANT planning permission subject to the following conditions:

01 Approved Plans
02 Temporary Permission…31 March 2021

11th May 2020