aDevelopment Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: **Recommendation – Approve**
AWDM/0005/13

Site: **Technology House, West Road, Southwick, Brighton West Sussex, BN41 1QH**

Proposal: **Change of use from B1 Office to D1 Church/Place of Worship and ancillary offices/rooms on ground floor with B1 offices on the upper floor**

Date of site visit: 23 January 2013

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a two storey office building on the corner of West Road and Laylands Road. It is proposed to convert the ground floor to a place of worship for the Redeemed Christian Church of God Kingdom Life Assembly. Works to commence the change of use took place in November 2012. The first floor is to remain in office use.

The ground floor is to be used as a church/worship hall, training centre and meeting place with function rooms and hall hire available. The submitted floor plan shows a main worship hall in the centre of the building with various offices and rooms around the hall.

The applicants are currently located in the former Pilot PH but have been given notice by the landlord. The activities associated with the use will be broadly similar to those at the Pilot but there will be no café/snack bar at Technology House. There is also a plan to register the building for marriage ceremonies and to use it as a campus for a Bible College.

Relevant site history

None relevant

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The Transport Planning Officer has no objection. As the B1 use is established and the associated parking could occur without the need for further permission, he is satisfied with the parking provision for this aspect.

He appreciates that intensive use of the D1 facility is likely to occur outside of business hours, so there is unlikely to be a full demand for parking from the site at any one time. A maximum parking provision of 25 spaces is recommended in the WSCC Parking Standards so it is evident that the site is

already operating at 1/5th the provision; a review of the Road Traffic Collision database indicates that there have been no accidents in the vicinity of the accesses in the past 36 months.

It is unlikely that the demand for parking generated by the development will be retained within the confines of the site. However, given that there are no identifiable accident trends associated with the points of access and there are a number of enforceable parking restrictions in the vicinity of the site protecting junctions and flow of Gardner Road, West Road and Westland it is unlikely that the proposed development will result in a Highway safety impact.

Having visited the site it is clear there are numerous locations that visitors could park in the surrounding streets and some parking bays are marked out. The applicant has not submitted a parking survey to demonstrate the on-street capacity but from observation there would appear to be space for visitors to park if required.

It's noted that the Applicant expects sustainable transport modes to be taken up and that a bus is provided from another location. While the scale of the development would not warrant a full Travel Plan, there might be some benefit in a Travel Plan Statement being produced which promotes the use of sustainable modes of transport - essentially a statement of intent to provide bus timetables, car sharing options etc via leaflets to congregation members, or through notice board announcements etc.

In an ideal world additional parking would be provided, but he appreciates that the constraints of the site makes that virtually impossible. The Highway Authority does not consider that any impact created by a shortfall in parking would be, mindful of NPPF, severe and no objection is raised to the proposed development.

Adur & Worthing Councils: The Environmental Health Officer has no adverse comments to make

Sussex Police: No objection

Health & Safety Executive: Do not advise against development

Representations

None received

Relevant Planning Policies

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, ACS5
South East Plan (GOSE 2009): SP3, CC1, CC6, T4, BE1, RE3, S3, S6
National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012)

Planning Assessment

Principle

While there will be a loss of some business floorspace, the site is not identified within the Local Plan for any particular use or purpose. First floor B1 use will be retained. South East Plan policy RE3 states that well-located industrial and commercial sites should be retained where there is a good prospect of employment use, but carries little weight as a material consideration following the Secretary of State's stated intention to abolish the RSS. [Policy 24 of the Draft Adur Local Plan 2012 states that outside identified employment sites the preferred approach is that the conversion of land or building last in B1, B2 or B8 use will be resisted unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the site or premises is genuinely redundant and unlikely to be re-used for industrial or commercial use within the Plan period, but carries little or no material weight at present]. On the other hand, Policy ACS5 supports proposals to develop community facilities within the built-up area.

The relevant considerations for this application are therefore the effects on the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential properties, the effect on the character of the surrounding area and parking and highway safety considerations.

Visual amenity

The use involves little change to the external appearance of the building (with the exception of signage which is considered separately under reference AWDM/0025/13).

Residential amenity

The site is located within a mixed area with flats and houses to the south and east. There is the potential for disturbance arising from amplified music during services and over-night vigils. However, the Church activities at the former Pilot Pub were not believed to have resulted in any noise complaints and the EHO has no objection to the current proposal. Over-night vigils are limited to one per month. The site is separated from the nearest dwellings by a road and there is a solid brick wall around the south and east site perimeter. There are therefore no concerns about the impact on residential amenity.

Parking and Highways

There are 5 parking spaces indicated on the plans; 4 at the rear accessed via a gated entrance and 1 at the front. There are parking restrictions in the immediate vicinity of the site in the form of double yellow lines but on street and lay-by parking is available further south on West Road.

The use commenced in November 2012 but no representations have been received which would suggest that the existing church use is not causing an amenity or highway safety problem for nearby residents.

The applicants have stated that there could be up to 17 employees at the premises at any one time Monday to Friday but in reality there will be very few times when everyone is in the office because about 12 of the staff work with

learners at their places of employment and would only be expected to be in the office for part of the day. They also have some part time employees. Most staff would probably be using their own transport.

For the D1 use, the current size of congregation is 60 during major church activities, the majority of whom are students at the University of Sussex and University of Brighton. Others are working class professionals and various family units including children. The transportation mode for members of congregation includes private cars, church van and public transport (buses, taxis and train). Currently, there are approximately 5 regular car users amongst members at a service meeting, mostly on Sundays. However majority of members are transported to and from Brighton-Church via the church van service for most of the church services.

The permanent week day staff at the church office comprises local residents who live 5 minutes walking distance from the building. Others are part-time workers who either come by public transport or work remotely from the church premises.

WSCC has no objection to the proposal, stating that sufficient on-street space is available in surrounding roads to cater for users of the facility. A Travel Plan is recommended, however, to encourage sustainable transport methods.

Hazardous Substances

The site lies within the outer consultation zone of the Texaco depot at Shoreham Harbour but the HSE has not advised against the granting of permission.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason:-

The use as a place of worship is consistent with the objective of supporting the local community. There is no exposure to unacceptable risk from the hazardous substances site on the south side of the harbour. It is considered the proposed development can take place without unacceptable detriment to the amenities of nearby residential properties and without detraction from highway safety. The proposed development would consequently not conflict with saved policies AG1 and ACS5 of the Adur Local Plan, and policies SP3, CC1, CC6, H1, H2, H4, H5, T4, BE1, RE3, S3 and S6 of the South East Plan.

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Approved drawings
2. Activity in connection with primary use as place of worship to cease by 12 midnight (except monthly night-vigil and New Year's Eve Cross-Over Service).
3. Restrict primary use to place of worship within Class D1
4. Travel Plan

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: Peter Barnett Date: 12 March 2013

Authorised by: Jo Morin Date: 13 March 2013