



Planning Statement

Change of use of commercial use to residential

The Hollies, 83 Little High Street, Worthing

Prepared by

WPS Planning

Planning Statement
83 Little High St

Prepared by:	Doug Wright
Date:	Oct 2025
Project Number:	167/2025

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA	1
3.0 PLANNING HISTORY OF THE SITE	2
4.0 THE PROPOSAL	2
5.0 PLANNING POLICY	3
6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT	4
7.0 CONCLUSION	10

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for the change of use of The Hollies, 83 Little High Street, Worthing, from a commercial use within Class E to a single self-contained dwellinghouse (Use Class C3).
- 1.2 The purpose of the statement is to describe the site and its context, provide details of the planning history and proposed development, and assess the scheme against the relevant national and local planning policies. The statement also responds to the issues identified in the pre-application response dated 26 September 2025 (Ref: PREAPP/0104/25), clarifying the lawful use position and policy considerations under the Worthing Local Plan.
- 1.3 The proposal seeks to return this historically significant listed building to its original use as a dwelling, ensuring its long-term preservation and appropriate occupation. The development will contribute positively to the borough's housing supply and enhance the character of the Little High Street Conservation Area.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The site is located at the junction of Little High Street and Upper High Street within Worthing's built-up area. The Hollies is a Grade II listed two-storey building constructed before 1815 and is an established part of the Little High Street Conservation Area. Its façade of pale fawn-coloured brickwork, hipped slate roof, and incised arched window bays form part of the area's distinctive architectural character.
- 2.2 The building is set within a small landscaped front garden and a rear yard that provides vehicle access and parking. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature, with traditional terraced and detached properties forming a coherent historic streetscape.
- 2.3 The property's location close to Worthing town centre, the seafront, and public transport links ensures that the site is highly sustainable. Future occupants

would have convenient access to shops, services, schools, and community facilities without dependence on private car travel.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The site's planning history reflects its varied use over time. Permission was first granted in 1994 for the temporary use of the premises as a social centre for people with mental health problems, followed by permanent consent in 1996 for the continuation of that use. The property later transitioned to private commercial activity, most recently operating as a Skin and Wellness Retreat and Beauty Clinic providing health and beauty treatments.
- 3.2 The building has now been vacant for approximately eighteen months. Despite these successive changes, its internal layout, proportions, and design remain consistent with those of a residential dwelling. Returning the property to a family home represents both a logical and sympathetic use.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of the existing vacant property from Class E to Class C3 residential use. The scheme does not involve any external alterations, extensions, or changes to the building's historic fabric. The existing layout lends itself naturally to residential use and would require only minor internal reconfiguration.
- 4.2 The front garden would remain as a landscaped private space, while the existing hardstanding to the rear would continue to provide off-street parking. No additional access or boundary changes are proposed.
- 4.3 This approach ensures that the historic and architectural features of the building are preserved, while enabling it to be brought back into active use. The proposal therefore delivers a sustainable and heritage-sensitive form of development.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that this should run through both plan-making and decision-taking. In terms of the determination of planning applications this should mean the approval of developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and that where the development plan is silent or relevant policies are out of date, that permission be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies of the NPPF indicate otherwise.

5.2 Sustainable development is seen within the NPPF as having three roles, namely an economic, social and environmental role which should be a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.

5.3 The following sections within the NPPF are important factors in the assessment of the proposal:

- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Local Plan

5.4 In terms of the local planning policy context for the Site, the adopted Development Plan for the Worthing Borough is composed of the following relevant documents:

- Worthing Local Plan (2020 – 2036) – Adopted March 2023 (WLP).

- Policy DM1 – Housing Mix
- Policy DM5 – Quality of Built Environment
- Policy DM13 – Retail & Town Centre Use
- Policy DM15 – Sustainable transport and active travel
- Policy DM16 – Sustainable Design
- Policy DM24 - The historic environment

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

6.1 The application site lies within the defined built-up area of Worthing and within a predominantly residential part of the town where a mix of dwelling types and scales contribute to the character of the area. The building itself was originally constructed and occupied as a dwelling before later changes of use introduced various forms of commercial activity. The proposal to revert the property to residential use is therefore entirely consistent with both the physical form and historical function of the building.

6.2 The Worthing Local Plan (2023) sets out a clear spatial strategy that seeks to direct new development towards sustainable and accessible locations within the existing urban area, making efficient use of previously developed land and supporting the re-use of existing buildings. Policy SP1 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, while Policy DM2 encourages the efficient use of land through the conversion and adaptation of suitable buildings. The proposal aligns directly with these aims by bringing a vacant, well-located property back into active residential use without the need for new construction.

6.3 The building is located within close proximity to Worthing town centre, the seafront, and public transport routes including Worthing railway station and multiple bus connections. This highly sustainable location allows future occupants to access employment, services, and amenities by sustainable

means, reducing reliance on the private car. The re-use of the site for residential purposes therefore accords with national policy objectives contained within paragraph 119 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which promotes the effective use of land by encouraging the re-use of existing buildings and previously developed sites.

- 6.4 In housing terms, the proposal contributes positively to local housing delivery. Policy DM1 of the Worthing Local Plan supports proposals that provide a mix of housing to meet identified needs, while Policy SP2 outlines the borough's requirement to deliver 3,672 new dwellings between 2020 and 2036. Although the re-use of this single property will make a modest numerical contribution, it will nonetheless provide a high-quality, sustainable home that supports the borough's housing strategy and the Government's overarching objective to boost the supply of homes as set out in paragraph 60 of the NPPF.
- 6.5 The proposal also reflects the guidance contained within paragraph 69 of the NPPF, which recognises the important role that small and medium-sized sites play in meeting housing requirements. The efficient re-use of a vacant building within the urban area will reduce pressure for development on greenfield sites and contribute to the vitality of the surrounding neighbourhood.
- 6.6 From a design and contextual perspective, the existing building sits comfortably within its setting, and its continued use as a dwelling will maintain the established pattern of development along Little High Street and Upper High Street. The proposal will not introduce any change in height, scale, or form, ensuring that the building continues to contribute positively to the visual character of the street scene and the wider conservation area.
- 6.7 In summary, the principle of development is clearly supported by both national and local planning policy. The site is sustainably located within the settlement boundary; the proposal represents the efficient re-use of a vacant heritage asset; it contributes to housing supply; and it enhances the character of the surrounding area. The development therefore accords with Policies SP1, SP2, DM1, DM2, and DM5 of the Worthing Local Plan, as well as the aims of the

National Planning Policy Framework, which collectively seek to promote sustainable patterns of growth, optimise the use of existing buildings, and deliver high-quality housing in accessible urban locations.

Loss of Existing Community Use

- 6.8 The pre-application advice referred to the 1996 planning consent which authorised the use of the property as a social centre. While that use originally fell within Class E(e), the building has not been occupied for community purposes for many years. Its subsequent and most recent operation as a Skin and Wellness Retreat and Beauty Clinic also fell within Class E but was a private commercial enterprise rather than a public facility.
- 6.9 Both the earlier and later uses are therefore within the same broad use class, and no planning permission was required for the transition between them. The property's lawful use before becoming vacant is Class E, not as an active community facility.
- 6.10 Policy DM8 of the Worthing Local Plan seeks to retain existing community facilities but applies only where such a facility exists and provides a social function to the wider community. As the site's recent use was a private business, the proposal does not constitute the loss of a community facility, and no marketing evidence is required.
- 6.11 This reasoning accords with paragraph 93 of the NPPF, which encourages the retention of community services only where they are demonstrably valued by and accessible to the public. The proposal therefore satisfies both local and national policy objectives.

Impact upon the Heritage Asset

- 6.12 The Hollies is a designated heritage asset of architectural and historical importance. The proposal involves no external or structural alterations and retains the building's existing layout, features, and materials. The use of the

building as a single dwelling is consistent with its original function and therefore reinforces its historic significance.

- 6.13 The site lies within the Little High Street Conservation Area, one of Worthing's earliest historic quarters characterised by its narrow lanes, modest-scale buildings, and the close-knit relationship between residential and small commercial uses. The area's significance derives from its 18th and 19th century townscape, with a mix of Georgian and early Victorian properties that reflect Worthing's early seaside development and the historic growth of the fishing community around the harbour. The Hollies occupies a prominent corner plot at the eastern end of Little High Street and makes a notable contribution to the visual enclosure of the street and the sense of continuity within the Conservation Area.
- 6.14 The Conservation Area Appraisal specifically identifies the front garden of The Hollies as an important open space that contributes to the setting of both the building and the surrounding streetscape. The retention of this garden area and the continued use of traditional boundary treatments will preserve this positive feature. By maintaining the building's domestic character and ensuring no external changes are proposed, the development will protect the special qualities and visual coherence of the Conservation Area.
- 6.15 Policy DM24 of the Worthing Local Plan requires that development preserves or enhances the setting, character, and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas. This proposal achieves that objective by reinstating the property's historic domestic use, maintaining its external appearance, and retaining its relationship with the surrounding historic streetscape.
- 6.16 This approach is supported by paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which confirm that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, and that viable uses consistent with their conservation should be encouraged. The change of use to a dwelling represents precisely such a viable and sympathetic use, ensuring that The

Hollies continues to make a positive contribution to the special interest and character of the Little High Street Conservation Area.

6.17 For the reasons outlined above, the proposal is considered to preserve and enhance both the character and appearance of The Hollies as a Grade II Listed Building and the wider Little High Street Conservation Area. The sensitive reinstatement of its original residential use, combined with the absence of external alterations and the retention of the established garden and boundary features, will ensure that the building continues to make a positive contribution to the historic townscape. Accordingly, the development accords with Policy DM24 of the Worthing Local Plan and the heritage objectives set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Impact on neighbour amenity

6.18 The change of use will lead to a significant reduction in activity compared to the former commercial operation. Customer visits, deliveries, and traffic movements will cease, reducing potential noise and disturbance. The proposed residential use will therefore enhance the living conditions of surrounding occupiers.

6.19 Policy DM5 of the Worthing Local Plan seeks to ensure that development provides an acceptable standard of amenity for existing and future occupants. The NPPF also emphasises the importance of achieving healthy, safe, and inclusive places under paragraph 130. The proposed residential use fully accords with these objectives.

Parking and Highway Impacts

6.20 The property benefits from existing off-street parking accessed from Upper High Street. This arrangement will remain unchanged. The level of parking is appropriate for a single dwelling, and the change of use will reduce traffic levels compared to the previous business operation.

6.21 The proposal is consistent with Policies DM15 and DM20 of the Worthing Local Plan, which require developments to promote sustainable travel and avoid

harmful impacts on highway safety. It also complies with paragraphs 110 and 111 of the NPPF, which seek to ensure that development minimises traffic impact and provides safe access.

Quality of residential environment for future occupiers

- 6.22 The property provides a floor area of approximately 250 square metres, comfortably exceeding the Nationally Described Space Standards for a four-bedroom dwelling. The internal layout offers spacious and well-lit accommodation with good outlook and ventilation. The front garden provides private amenity space suitable for a family home.
- 6.23 This meets the design and quality expectations of Policies DM5 and DM16 of the Worthing Local Plan, which require developments to achieve high standards of living conditions and environmental performance. It also accords with paragraph 130 of the NPPF, which encourages well-designed places that provide a high standard of amenity for future users.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed change of use of The Hollies, 83 Little High Street, Worthing, from a vacant commercial premises within Class E to a single dwellinghouse within Class C3, represents a carefully considered and policy-compliant form of development. The application provides a sustainable and sympathetic re-use of a designated heritage asset, ensuring its preservation and continued maintenance while contributing positively to local housing supply and the wider character of the Little High Street Conservation Area.
- 7.2 The proposal responds directly to the Council's pre-application advice, demonstrating that while the 1996 planning permission originally permitted a community-type use within Class E(e), the building has not operated in that capacity for many years. The subsequent and most recent use as a Skin and Wellness Retreat and Beauty Clinic also fell within Class E, but as a private commercial business it does not meet the definition of a community facility as set out under Policy DM8 of the Worthing Local Plan. On this basis, the proposal does not result in the loss of a community use and therefore does not trigger any requirement for marketing evidence or replacement provision.
- 7.3 From a policy standpoint, the development is firmly supported by the Worthing Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Policy SP1 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF confirms that applications which accord with an up-to-date plan should be approved without delay. The site is located within the defined built-up area boundary and within an accessible and sustainable location, close to the town centre and public transport routes. The proposal therefore aligns with the spatial strategy for growth and regeneration within the borough.
- 7.4 In heritage terms, the proposal preserves and enhances the special architectural and historic interest of The Hollies, a Grade II listed building of local importance. The absence of external alterations ensures that the visual character and contribution of the property to the Little High Street Conservation

Area are maintained. Returning the building to its original residential use represents a form of development that is historically authentic, sustainable, and beneficial to the long-term conservation of the asset. The proposal therefore accords fully with Policy DM24 of the Worthing Local Plan and the heritage objectives set out in Section 16 of the NPPF.

- 7.5 The development would also enhance local amenity through the reduction of noise, traffic, and general disturbance associated with commercial activity, thereby improving the living conditions of neighbouring residents. The re-use of the existing hardstanding for parking ensures the proposal is acceptable in highway and parking terms, fully compliant with Policies DM15 and DM20.
- 7.6 In design and environmental terms, the conversion provides a high standard of internal and external living accommodation. The building's generous proportions and layout exceed national space standards and provide excellent natural light and outlook. The landscaped front garden delivers adequate private amenity space appropriate for a family home. The scheme therefore meets the quality and design expectations of Policies DM5 and DM16 of the Worthing Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 7.7 The proposal will also contribute to the Council's wider objectives of supporting town centre regeneration and sustainable urban living by optimising the use of an existing building in a well-connected location. It represents an efficient use of land and supports the housing strategy set out within the Local Plan and the Government's broader aims to make the most effective use of the built environment.
- 7.8 Overall, this application demonstrates full compliance with the relevant policies of the Worthing Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. It provides a sustainable, well-considered, and beneficial outcome for the site, the building, and the local area. The change of use will ensure the continued occupation and upkeep of a listed building, secure its long-term future, and make a positive contribution to the borough's housing stock and heritage environment.

7.9 In conclusion, the proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development that fully satisfies the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the NPPF. It accords with the adopted development plan, preserves heritage significance, and delivers an overall public benefit through the re-use of a vacant listed building. It is respectfully requested that planning permission be approved.