

Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWD/0207/26 **Recommendation:** – APPROVE

Site: **Therapy Centre Henry House 189 Heene Road Worthing**

Proposal: **Retrospective application for solar-thermal panels in the rear garden**

Date of Site Visit: 23/04/26

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional Neighbours Notified: N

Site and Surroundings

The site is located to the west side of Heene Road within a residential area of Worthing and within the Shakespeare Road Conservation Area. The property comprises a detached two storey building with brick, render and mock Tudor elevations and a pitched roof with bay to the front. There is a large flat roof single storey extension to the rear housing a hydrotherapy pool, built in 1984 and a further first floor flat roof extension to the rear above the garage. There are extensive solar panels fitted to the roof of the main building and the flat roofs of the rear extensions. There is a large garden to the rear with a bank of rainwater harvesting containers within sheds adjacent to the south boundary of the site.

The property is used as a private residential house occupying part of the ground and all of the first floor, and a hydrotherapy treatment centre at ground floor, comprising a poolroom, sauna, changing room, shower, WCs and poolroom reception. The centre provides Hydrotherapy post-operative care (e.g. hip, shoulder and knee replacement) for the elderly and disabled and those suffering from long term pain and weakness syndromes e.g. Rheumatoid Arthritis, Osteoarthritis, Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Cerebral Palsy and Post Traumatic rehabilitation.

The property is not listed and there are no protected trees on site.

Proposal

Retrospective planning permission is sought for the retention of solar thermal panels within the rear garden. These panels have been installed on top of the bank of rainwater storage sheds adjacent to the south boundary. The sheds housing the rainwater harvesting tanks are understood to have been installed in 2004 (without permission) and are used to store rainwater which is then filtered and treated and used to fill the pool.

(The Applicant has stated that an enquiry was made to the Council in 2004 to check whether planning permission was required for the sheds and was informed that no permission was required. However, as this was a verbal enquiry there is no record of this enquiry.)

In 2024 the old solar panels to the south facing roof were replaced with new more efficient panels and the array increased to include 4 new panels on the existing water storage sheds within the rear garden. It is these 4 panels that are the subject of the application.

The panels are located on top of the water storage sheds adjacent to the south boundary of the site which is formed by a high wall. The panels start 10cm below the top of the wall and are set back from the wall by 45cm and slope back into the site at an angle of 30 degrees, supported on an aluminium frame. The garden wall is approximately 1.8m high and the panels project 1.35m above the wall. The highest point of the panels, measured from ground level within the site is approximately 3.15m high at a distance of 1.75m from the boundary. Each panel measures approximately 2.15m x 1.45m

The solar panel installation commenced on 01/06/2024 and was completed on 31/07/2024.

Relevant Planning History:

542/82/WB – Erection of single storey extension to rear to provide enclosed swimming pool, sauna, changing room, double garage.
STATUS: Conditional Consent 23rd August 1982.

497/83/WB – Erection of extension at first floor level on south elevation above existing garage to provide two bedrooms and WC.
STATUS: Conditional Consent 11th July 1983.

811/83/WB – Change of use from single dwelling to guest house.
STATUS: Conditional Consent 8th November 1983

93/05321/FULL - Installation of fire escape to rear elevation
STATUS: Conditional Consent 30th June 1993.

97/05407/FULL - Change of use from a guest house to part residential for owners accommodation and part acupuncture therapy centre, including use of existing hydrotherapy pool
STATUS: Conditional Consent 3rd September 1997.

Consultations

Environmental Health: No comments

Environmental Health Private Sector Housing: No comments received

The Worthing Society: No comments received

Neighbour Representations

11 representations received from customers within Adur and Worthing, in support of the application:

- I am a disabled lady who lives with chronic pain. I and many others find the hydrotherapy pool a god send. I personally attend twice weekly. The fact they have solar panels enables them to keep costs down and are so much better for the environment. If the owners have to remove the panels and then find an alternative power source, they will naturally have to increase their prices. Worst case scenario would be they might have to close. They provide a vital service for people like myself not only does it give physical benefits but is also good for mental health. The small group of people in both my sessions have physical disabilities and like myself get relief from pain and are able to get some form of exercise. I really hope you give permission for the property to remain as it is as otherwise it will have a negative effect on a great many people. On a personal note, until today most of us hadn't even realised they had solar panels as the lovely garden disguises them. Please take into account that this issue is so much bigger than just an ordinary issue between neighbours. I hope this helps with your decision.*
- I have been a regular user of Henry House on Heene Road for over a year. I tend to use the facilities around 2-3 times a week. I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease last year and suffer with mobility issues and chronic pain. Henry House remains a huge part of my ongoing recovery as the hydro pool is one of the few things that helps ease my pain and helps me keep a relatively 'normal' life. I recognise I am in a privileged position as I am able to afford to pay for the weekly sessions. I recognise that many other people struggle to pay for one of these vital sessions per week but do so as the hydro pool is so beneficial to many people with various physical and mental health conditions. Sessions are £12 for an hour. I am conscious that due to the solar panels and other cost saving/sustainable ways of managing the therapy centre that myself, and many others who are living on a pension, are too ill to work and/or are in chronic pain are able to afford to help ourselves and go to Henry House. Any cost increases, that could happen if planning permission is not given, could have a huge detrimental effect on many living in the local community. Not only could price increases mean that many people (some of whom have very little money due to struggling with their health) are prevented from coming to Henry House and their physical health suffers but their mental health is impacted also - being with other people, making friends and having social interactions is so vital. Henry House also provides this. It is really vital that Henry House keeps costs down and remains at the heart of the therapeutic community in Worthing. Please grant retrospective planning permission.*
- I am a user of the hydrotherapy pool at Henry House Therapy Centre. Using hydrotherapy helps me to manage my chronic health conditions and I currently use the pool once a week. I'm aware that the solar panels help keep the cost down to just £12 a session which makes it possible for me to afford to use the service. The service is used by a number of people with illnesses, disabilities or other needs - many of whom are unable to work or living on a pension - and is an amazing community resource. Especially with the recent energy price volatility and increases, the solar panels help to keep this service accessible to those who need it. Please approve this application for retroactive planning.*

- *The solar panels in question are not obtrusive and are under 2 large trees in the garden. The hydrotherapy pool requires the solar panels to reduce high running costs for a vital service needed by a huge number of disabled and elderly customers suffering with chronic pain in and around this area.*
- *I am sending my support because the solar thermal panels are ecologically friendly and keep costs down for the elderly and disabled customers who use the hydrotherapy pool.*
- *I am a regular and long term user of the hydrotherapy pool at Henry House and I fully support this application because:*
 - 1. it is environmentally friendly.*
 - 2. Reduces the business' carbon footprint.*
 - 3. Provides a very important and well used facility which aids health and wellbeing in the community.*
 - 4. Makes perfect sense for the business owner to manage the of cost of heating and running the pool.*
- *I am writing to express my strong support for the above application for solar panels at Henry House.*

From a planning perspective, I consider this application to be entirely appropriate for its setting. The building is not listed, nor is it subject to heritage constraints, and the addition of solar panels is a widely accepted form of sustainable development. In a residential context such as Heene Road, solar panels are now a familiar feature. I do not believe they introduce any harmful visual impact and if a roof is visible, then solar panels are simply a natural and increasingly expected part of that roofscape.

More importantly, the proposal aligns strongly with both local and national planning priorities around sustainability and the transition to net zero. Energy generation through renewable sources is actively encouraged, and developments such as this represent exactly the kind of incremental, responsible change that contributes to wider environmental goals. A heated swimming pool is, by its nature, energy-intensive; therefore, reducing reliance on grid electricity through solar generation is not only sensible but highly responsible. It demonstrates a proactive commitment to reducing carbon emissions and supporting the Council's environmental ambitions.

However, it is the community value of Henry House that I feel is most significant and deserving of weight in this decision. Henry House is an exceptional local facility that supports a remarkably wide cross-section of the community. It provides vital services for:

- *Older residents maintaining mobility and independence*
- *Individuals recovering from injury or surgery*
- *Disabled people requiring low-impact rehabilitation*
- *Babies and young children learning essential swimming skills—particularly important in a coastal town such as Worthing.*

Its reach extends well beyond the immediate area, with people travelling from across West Sussex and further afield to access its facilities. This is not simply a private business; it is a deeply valued community asset.

I speak from personal experience as someone who relies on Henry House for rehabilitation. Managing ongoing joint pain requires consistent access to warm water therapy. This allows me to maintain mobility, reduce pain, and live as independently as possible ultimately reducing reliance on NHS services. The pool is used by three professional MSK therapists on a 1:1 basis which supports local jobs.

If this application were refused, and energy costs remained high or increased, it is inevitable that prices would rise. This would directly impact not only myself but many others—particularly older and more vulnerable residents—who depend on these services. For some (me), it may mean losing access altogether. (I already make personal sacrifices to continue attending, given the current cost of living).

The solar panels are therefore not just an environmental improvement; it is a practical measure to help safeguard the long-term affordability and accessibility of a vital community facility.

Finally, I would add that Henry House has long demonstrated a strong environmental ethos. Their commitment to sustainability is not new or superficial it is embedded in how they operate and how they serve the community. Supporting this application would be entirely consistent with encouraging responsible, community-focused businesses that actively contribute to local environmental goals.

In summary, the proposal:

- Has no meaningful visual or heritage impact*
- Makes a positive contribution to climate and sustainability objectives*
- Helps protect a valuable and widely used community resource*

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Council to approve this application.

- Solar panels help to keep the cost of swims down for all users of this pool, whether that be elderly and disabled users and children's swimming lessons. it is necessary for keeping the cost down to make the pool accessible for everyone !*
- These solar panels are positioned discreetly under two large trees in the garden so are not visible. They play an integral role in reducing high running costs of the hydrotherapy pool which provides a vital service for many disabled/ elderly customers who rely heavily on the warm water to manage their chronic pain and mobility issues.*

- *Fantastic place for the community and a wonderful example of a local business run sustainably!*
- *I fully support the Henry House application for Solar Panels. I've used the Hydrotherapy Pool following surgery, it has been such a help to me. They have many varied clients from baby lessons to supporting children & adults with special needs. The solar panels help keep the prices down & without them many would not be able to afford to attend their sessions.*

Relevant Planning Policies:

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, SP2, SP3, DM5, DM17
 National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024)
 National Planning Practice Guidance
 Shakespeare Road Conservation Area Appraisal

Planning Assessment:

There is no objection in principle to extensions and alterations to residential dwellings and commercial uses within the built-up area. The key considerations are the effects on the visual and residential amenities of the locality, the impact on the conservation area and benefits to sustainability.

Visual Amenity and Conservation Area

The Council have a statutory duty to enhance or preserve the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The panels are relatively large as required for the specific type of panels designed to heat water. A total of 4 panels are installed adjacent to the south boundary of the site and are raised above ground level on top of the water storage sheds. Due to the nature of the panels, and their requirement for full sun, the panels cannot be reduced in size, screened or positioned elsewhere within the garden as these would be shaded by existing trees and built features or be ineffective to support the efficiency requirements.

The panels are installed within the rear garden of the property and are not visible in any public views. Due to the fact that these panels cannot be seen from any public view point they are not considered to result in any significant harm to the character of the street scene or the setting of the Conservation Area.

Whilst it is accepted that Solar Thermal Panels fitted on the timber sheds do not necessarily preserve the character of the conservation area, any harm is 'less than substantial' and outweighed by a clear public benefit in the services provided by this business, and the sustainable credentials of its operation.

On balance therefore, the retention of solar thermal panels in this location within the rear garden of the property, not visible from the public realm would not result in any significant harm to the visual amenities of the locality or the conservation area setting.

Residential Amenity

The most affected neighbours are those to the south of the site at No.187 and 187A Heene Road. The solar panels are also visible from the flats at Aspen Court to the rear and from the upper floors to properties to the south of the site.

The panels are clearly visible from the rear openings and the garden at No.187 and 187A which is adjacent to the south boundary of the site. The panels, at their highest point are approximately 1.35m above the wall at a distance of 1.75m from the boundary. The panels are set in away from the wall by 0.45m with the lowest point closest to the wall. The panels slope up away from the boundary.

Due to the angle of the panels sloping away from the boundary and their position to the north of No.187, the panels are not considered to appear oppressive or affect light to the neighbour's house or garden, however it is recognised that they are a dominant feature within the garden setting. There would be some light reflection from the panels however the glare is not significant.

It is noted that no objections have been received from any of the affected properties and whilst the absence of objections does not imply that a development is acceptable, in this instance a balance must be found between the benefits for sustainability and climate change and the impact on neighbours.

Sustainability

Worthing Local Plan Policy SP2 – Climate Change, states:

Carbon Reduction

a) Development proposals are expected to reduce the amount of energy used in construction and operation of buildings and improve energy efficiency, including retrofitting existing properties, to contribute to achieving zero carbon emissions.

b) The Council will support and promote the creation of low carbon heating/cooling networks and the delivery of renewable energy schemes.

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

h) Development must be designed to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change and reduce vulnerability, particularly in terms of overheating, flood risk and water supply.

i) Ensure buildings and infrastructure are designed to adapt to a changing climate, making efficient use of water, reducing impacts from natural hazards like flooding and heatwaves, while mitigating against and avoiding contributing to the urban heat island effect. This should include maximising opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation.

j) The Council will seek adaptation and mitigation measures which improve the

resilience of communities, reduce inequality and bring a range of social benefits

The rainwater harvesting tanks significantly reduce water consumption for the business and private residence and are used to harvest rainwater which is then filtered and treated and used to fill the pool. The system also stores grey water from the pool (changed each week) which is used to flush toilets.

The solar panels located above the rainwater harvesting tanks are required to heat the water for the hydrotherapy pool (to 35 degrees) and significantly reduce the reliance on gas. The solar panels are specifically designed for this purpose.

These measures help to reduce water consumption, alleviate flooding (through the collection of rainwater) and significantly reduce reliance on fossil fuels, supporting climate change mitigation.

Worthing Local Plan Policy SP3 – Healthy Communities, states:

a) New development must be designed to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, which enable and support healthy lifestyles and address health and well-being needs in Worthing.

The social benefits gained through the provision of sustainable features which help to reduce costs, can be demonstrated through maintaining low prices for clients using the hydrotherapy pool, benefitting the local community and helping to address health and well-being needs in the local area.

Conclusion

Although it is recognised that there is some impact on residential amenity resulting from the placement of the solar panels adjacent to the boundary, it is also recognised that there are no other locations that could provide the same level of heating capacity for the hydrotherapy pool. The addition of solar panels provides significant benefits in mitigating climate change by reducing water consumption and reliance on fossil fuels. The proposal helps to support healthy lifestyles and address health and well-being needs in Worthing.

On balance and considering the lack of any objections received from affected neighbours and the less than substantial harm to the conservation area, the benefits to sustainability and health and continued provision of a valuable asset to the local community are considered to outweigh any negative impact on residential amenity and the 'less than substantial' effect on the character of the conservation area, and retention of the solar panels is therefore considered acceptable.

Recommendation:

APPROVE subject to condition(s):-

1. Drawing Numbers

2. The solar panels and equipment hereby approved shall be removed from the property as soon as reasonably practicable when no longer required for the purpose specified within the application documents.

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? N

Case Officer: Amanda Haslett Date: 11/05/26

Authorised by: Jo Morin Date: 12.05.2026