

THE WORTHING SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 286899

Date: 6 August 2026

Planning Department

Adur and Worthing Councils

Town Hall

Chapel Road

Worthing BN11 1HA

planning@adur-worthing.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

WORTHING SOCIETY CONSULTATION RESPONSE-AWDM/0727/26

Thank you for requesting the Society's comments in respect of the aforementioned Planning Application which relates to the Colonnade. Before consideration is given to our comments, we draw your attention to the fact that the 'Design and Access and Heritage Statement' is inaccurate. It makes no mention of the historic value of the building, wrongly stating it is not included on the Local Interest List. In addition, there are no references to the photovoltaic panels, which are an important part of this application, and no reasoned justification for their inclusion and proposed siting. Bearing in mind these fundamental faults, the conclusions of the Design and Access and Heritage Statement cannot be relied upon in support of the application. We have therefore prepared our response by referring to the Conservation Area Appraisal Document and the Local Interest List.

This historic building circa 1803, is recorded on the Council's Local Interest List, which includes buildings of architectural and historic interest. In fact, this was the first public building constructed in Worthing during the period of rapid development in the early 19th century. There are historical associations with Jane Austen's visit to Worthing in 1805 and the Georgian architect John Rebecca. The building is located on a prominent corner site within the South

Street Conservation Area. Although there were changes to the building in the 1930s, the essence of the original building and distinctive roof line remain.

The Colonnade is an active arts gallery and exhibition hub. This application covers several aspects for the proposed changes, to include re-siting the layout of the entrance, replacement windows plus photovoltaic panels on both the north and south elevations of the roof.

Following a recent meeting on site, which was much appreciated, I have now had the opportunity to discuss this application with our Heritage Team. We consider the style and materials proposed for the windows would be appropriate in the context of the 1930s facade of the building. Although they are not Crittall windows they would be an acceptable match.

Regarding the changes to the ground floor entrance; these seem acceptable. The design would be sensitive and would facilitate a more streamlined entrance to the gallery and exhibition space allowing comfortable access for the disabled. There would also be the opportunity to enlarge Gallery 2 and to give a more satisfactory configuration of the combined office/kitchen space for the staff.

The third aspect of this application is the addition of photovoltaic panels to the roof. On examining the proposed roof plan, we have no objection to the installation of the panels to the north elevation of the roof, as this is not readily visible from the conservation area

However, where we digress is the proposed siting of photovoltaic panels on the south facing elevation of the roof. The drawings show the panels would cover a considerable proportion of the slate roof and would, in our opinion, be obtrusive. These panels would sit raised from the roof slates by about 130mm (5 inches). They would be clearly visible from within Steyne Gardens and when viewed from the east along Brighton Road, where the upstand from the plane of the roof would be visible and incongruous. I have attached some photographs of both aspects for your consideration.

In our opinion the proposed panels would alter the character and appearance of the slate roof, which is a distinctive feature of this tall heritage building. Furthermore, the panels would not be consistent with the overall setting of this part of the conservation area, which is in one of the oldest quarters of the town. There are proximate statutorily Listed Buildings including the Grade II

Listed Whibley's jewellers shop on the opposite corner and the listed terrace in Steyne Gardens.

Whilst we can appreciate the benefits of solar panels to sustainability and reducing energy costs, their inclusion on the south elevation of the building would, in our view, have a negative impact on the character of the Colonnade. We respectfully suggest that every effort is made to re-site these solar panels on a less obtrusive part of the roof. Possibly they could be added to the panel array on the north-facing elevation of the roof, with internal strengthening of the roof timbers if necessary. Another alternative could be adding additional panels to the west facing roof of the adjacent building, which has recently been absorbed into the Colonnade hub for additional meeting space. Possibly a small number of panels could be sited on the south roof slope if these could be hidden from view by the existing parapet, although their effective concealment would have to be demonstrated. There may be other design options or other internal methods of insulation to conserve energy.

In conclusion we do understand the pressures of climate change and energy costs, however, where photovoltaic panels are suggested for heritage buildings, whether on the Statutory List, in a conservation area or, as in this case, on the Local List, a balanced decision needs to be made. The value of the small amount of electricity that would be generated by the panels concerned has to be balanced against the visual harm that their siting would cause to the heritage asset.

Our historic buildings make a considerable contribution to our local tourist economy, and the Colonnade will be included in our forthcoming tour of 'Jane Austen's Worthing.' Last year we showed the building to two groups of tourists from the Jane Austen Society of North America, and we have another visit arranged for next year.

There will inevitably be challenges ahead to improve insulation and provide efficient energy, but the Society considers that these challenges should not justify causing significant harm to heritage assets. It will always be important to strike a balance when we consider applications of this nature for the built heritage environment.

We submit, therefore, that the installation of photovoltaic panels on the south facing roof would not be consistent with Policy DM 24 of the Worthing Local Plan and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Susan Belton

Mrs Susan Belton

Worthing Society Chair

cc to John Head BSC (Econ), Dip TP, MRTPI (Ret), Heritage Team Lead

cc to Richard Small, AWDC Design and Conservation Architect, for information.





