


<b>APPLICATION NUMBER:</b>	LW/07/1264	<b>ITEM NUMBER:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>APPLICANTS NAME(S):</b>	Solway (Sussex) Ltd	<b>PARISH / WARD:</b>	Seaford / Seaford South
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Planning Application for Change of use and conversion of existing school buildings including demolition of north east building to be replaced with new building in total to form 54 self-contained flats with provision for 54 car parking spaces (resubmission of LW/07/0724)		
<b>SITE ADDRESS:</b>	Newlands Court, Sutton Avenue, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 4LB		
<b>GRID REF:</b>	TQ 4998		



## **1. SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL**

1.1 The site is Newlands Court, which comprises the former Annecy Convent School buildings, located at the corner of Sutton Avenue and Southdown Road.

1.2 It is proposed to convert the older buildings on the site, which are generally Edwardian, 2/3 storey and of brick and tile, to 37 flats. These buildings would be refurbished, with little external alteration, but all external fire escapes and landings would be removed, together with some single storey wings. A more modern building at the rear (constructed around 1960 and including a former science room and dance studios) would be demolished and replaced with an extension consisting of a further 17 flats. The replacement buildings in brick and tile, would be in keeping with the older buildings on the site.

1.3 Overall, 54 flats are proposed, being 31 one-bedroom and 23 two-bedroom.

1.4 54 parking spaces (one per flat) would be provided on site (largely around the perimeter) together with cycle's storage for 54 bikes. Adjacent to the north boundary, the parking area would be lowered and a tiled roof screen constructed to reduce noise and disturbance to the adjacent property 28 Southdown Road, which is relatively close to the boundary.

1.5 Existing trees and flint boundary walls would be retained. Additional landscaping would be carried out within the site.

1.6 Two vehicular access points would serve the development. These would be off Sutton Avenue (as existing) and off Southdown Road (a new access to replace two existing access points). An 'in-out' vehicle access/egress arrangement would operate with traffic leaving the site via the Southdown Road access and entering via the Sutton Avenue access.

## **2. RELEVANT POLICIES**

**LDLP: – ST03 – Design, Form and Setting of Development**

## **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

**No relevant history.**

## **4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM STANDARD CONSULTEES**

**Main Town Or Parish Council – Object: Overdevelopment - 54 flats is too many; Traffic concerns - too many vehicles entering and leaving the site and the proximity of a primary school.**

**Sussex Police - C.P.D.A. – Made detailed comments on the security aspects of the proposal which has been copied to the applicant.**

**Highway Authority** – Does not wish to restrict grant of consent. Notes that the site has been operating as a private school. The one-way system for cars through the site is considered to have merit. Parking complies with the council's standard. Based on the applicants information that previously 75 pupils (including 15 boarders) attending the school and there were 20 Nursery pupils, it is considered that there would be a reduction in traffic to/from the site. A financial contribution of £55,350 is sought to put towards improving accessibility in this part of Seaford.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS**

5.1 21 letters have been received from residents objecting to the application. The main grounds for objection are that the number of flats proposed is excessive and would generate traffic which would cause congestion and hazards, particularly in relation to a nearby school in Sutton Avenue; parking would be inadequate and overspill to nearby roads, causing further congestion and hazards; the proposal would be out of character in the area; there would be an unacceptable effect on local infrastructure; residential use overlooking a school playground would not be acceptable; the development gives nothing to the local community; overlooking, loss of privacy and noise an disturbance would result; the position of the new access onto Southdown Road would be unacceptable opposite a private drive in highway terms, and would also give rise to glare from headlights leaving the site onto the house whose driveway is opposite.

## **6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The site is within Seaford Planning Boundary in the Council's Lewes District Local Plan. Within the Planning Boundary, new residential development can be accepted in principle, but individual proposals must comply with district-wide policies in the Local Plan. These policies include Policy ST3, which aims to ensure that new development respects the character of the area within which it is located, respects the amenities of adjoining properties and does not result in detriment to the character or amenities of the area through, for example, increased traffic levels or hazards.

### **Effect on character of the area**

6.2 The existing buildings on the site (which it is proposed to convert) are attractive and make a positive contribution to the character of the area. The buildings have, however, been vacant for some time and show signs of deterioration. As the buildings are not listed and are not in a conservation area, they are not protected and could be demolished at any time without reference to the Council. It is considered that demolition of the buildings would be unfortunate in terms of the effect on the established townscape of the area. Therefore, in principle, the conversion and refurbishment of the buildings on the site is strongly welcomed. It is further considered that in the current application, the buildings would be refurbished in a sympathetic manner which would ensure their retention and continued contribution to the local townscape in the longer term.

6.3 The demolition of the more modern wing to the rear of the older buildings is considered to be acceptable. That wing makes no positive contribution to the area. The replacement, an extension to the existing building, would match the buildings to be converted and would bring a pleasing uniformity to the building group as a whole.

6.4 Parking spaces would be provided within the site which, adjacent to the road frontages, would be behind the perimeter flint boundary wall. Parking spaces would also be provided adjacent to the north site boundary behind the main building group.

6.5 Much local objection to the application has centred on what is seen as an excessive number of flats which are proposed. Objectors consider that the proposal constitutes overdevelopment, and that this would be evident in the local area by, for example, unacceptable traffic generation. While the density would clearly be above that of most other residential development in the locality (which tends to comprise single dwellings in individual plots), the proposal could be seen as making an efficient use of brownfield land and securing the reuse of buildings which make a positive contribution to the local environment. Given that existing buildings are generally to be reused, no extra physical development would result. Furthermore, as a matter of judgement, it is not considered that traffic generation, or comings and goings to and from the site, would be so substantial as to materially alter the character of the locality.

6.6 Overall, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of the character of the area. It is considered that the conversion and refurbishment of the older buildings would be a significant benefit in terms of retaining important townscape in the longer term.

### **Amenities of adjoining and nearby properties**

6.7 The 37 flats to be formed from the converted buildings would use existing windows which were of course present in the previous use as a school. Many of the windows face the Sutton Avenue and Southdown Road frontages. It is not considered that undue overlooking would be caused from existing windows in the building following conversion to flats.

6.8 The replacement of the more modern wing with an extension to the existing building has given rise to an issue concerning possible overlooking to adjacent 28 Southdown Road and the garden of Littlecourt (on Sutton Avenue). 28 Southdown Road has side bedroom windows facing the site. However, windows in the new wing would be set down lower at first floor level and would be further away than the corresponding windows in the wing to be demolished. This should mean that sightlines to the side windows in 28 Southdown Road from the upper floor of the new wing would be obstructed by the boundary fence, thereby preventing undue overlooking from occurring. To the east, overlooking to Littlecourt would, to an extent, be reduced by boundary trees and vegetation. In the circumstances, it is not considered that

the extent of any overlooking to adjoining and other properties would be so significant as to justify refusal.

6.9 Parking is proposed along the north boundary with 28 Southdown Road, which as noted above has side windows facing the site. As a change from the previous application, it is proposed to reduce the ground levels on this part of the site to lower the parking spaces in relation to 28 Southdown Road. It is also proposed to provide a cover arching over those parking spaces to help prevent the transmission of any noise and disturbance to that property. Given these measures, it is considered that the effect of the parking spaces on 28 Southdown Road would not be so significant as to justify refusal on this ground.

### **Parking/Access/Traffic generation**

6.10 The proposal would provide 54 parking spaces and stores for 54 bicycles - one of each per flat - which would comply with the Council's parking standard. While it is clearly the case that any overspill parking would use local roads, the degree to which this may occur would not, it is considered, constitute grounds for refusal.

6.11 There would be an in/out arrangement for vehicular circulation within the site, using the two accesses which are proposed. Vehicles would enter the site by the Sutton Avenue access, and leave by the Southdown Road access. The Highway Authority raises no objection to the accesses in terms of sightlines or the circulation arrangement which is proposed. Much local concern has been raised about the potential for conflict between the use of the accesses, and traffic generated by the development overall, and the proximity of the nearby school in Sutton Avenue. The school generates traffic and pedestrian activity particularly at morning and afternoon peaks, with children obviously in the vicinity and parents/guardians dropping off or collecting children from the school. In the morning peak, traffic leaving the site would be onto Southdown Road, around the corner from the school. In the afternoon, when children are leaving the school, traffic could enter the site in Sutton Avenue, but at that time there may be less concentration of vehicles entering the flats site. It would also be the case that any future use of the application site, including its continuing in educational use, would generate traffic close to the existing school in Sutton Avenue. In the circumstances, it is not considered that the proximity of the school would constitute grounds for refusal.

6.12 The effect of traffic generated by the proposal onto the wider highway network is considered to be acceptable.

### **Other issues**

6.13 25% of the flats (13 flats) would be 'affordable', and secured as such through a Section 106 Agreement. This element of the proposal would particularly help meet local housing need, while the development as a whole would help meet the district housing land supply.

6.14 The proposal would generate financial contributions towards the provision/improvement of public open space provision, education facilities add towards improving accessibility in this part of Seaford. Such contributions would also be secured through a section 106 Agreement.

## **Conclusion**

6.15 The application concerns a relatively large site in this part of Seaford, which contains existing buildings which are considered to make a positive contribution to the local environment. The proposal would reuse and refurbish those buildings which, it is considered, is a significant factor in favour of the proposal. While local concern has been expressed about the density of the development, it is not considered that the effects of the development in the locality, including traffic generation and the proximity of the school in Sutton Avenue, would be so great as to justify refusal of the application. The impact on adjoining residential amenity is also considered to be acceptable. The proposal constitutes an efficient use of a brownfield site in a satisfactory manner, and is considered to be acceptable.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

That planning permission be granted, subject to completion of a section 106 Agreement to secure affordable housing and financial contributions towards open space, education facilities and improving accessibility in Seaford.

### **The application is subject to the following conditions:**

1. Before the development hereby approved is commenced on site, details/samples of all external materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in accordance with that consent.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development in keeping with the locality having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

2. The flint boundary walls around the perimeter of the site shall be retained, except where breached a shown on the approved layout plan.

Reason: In the interests of the character of the area, having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

3. Following implementation of this permission, vehicles leaving the site shall only do so by the egress onto Southdown Road, and vehicles entering the site shall only do so by the access from Sutton Avenue. Signs shall be erected advising residents and visitors of this arrangement in accordance with a scheme which shall be installed prior to first occupation of any of the approved flats.

Reason: In the interests of vehicular circulation in the locality, having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

4. The land indicated on the approved plans for the parking and turning of vehicles for the development hereby permitted shall be laid out prior to the first occupation/use of the development and thereafter kept available for that purpose only.

Reason: To ensure adequate off-street parking provision having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

5. The levels of the site adjacent to the north boundary shall be reduced in accordance with the approved plans and a cover shall be erected over the parking spaces along that boundary, also in accordance with the approved plans, all prior to occupation of any of the flats hereby approved.

Reason: To help safeguard the amenities of residents of 28 Southdown Road, having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

6. No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and these works shall be carried out as approved.

Reason; To enhance the general appearance of the development having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

**This decision is based on the following submitted plans/documents:**

<u>PLAN TYPE</u>	<u>DATE RECEIVED</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
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**Summary of reasons for decision and any relevant development plan policies/proposal:**

It is considered that the proposal meets the aims and objectives of Local Plan Policy and respects the character of the location, complying with Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.