

<u>No:</u>	BH2025/03062	<u>Ward:</u>	Hollingdean & Fiveways Ward
<u>App Type:</u>	Full Planning		
<u>Address:</u>	Homewood College Queensdown Road Brighton BN1 7LA		
<u>Proposal:</u>	Change of use from school (F.1) to community hub for charities (F.2) for a temporary period of 6 years.		
<u>Officer:</u>	Michael Tucker, tel: 292359	<u>Valid Date:</u>	11.02.2026
<u>Con Area:</u>		<u>Expiry Date:</u>	13.05.2026
<u>Listed Building Grade:</u>		<u>EOT:</u>	
Agent:			
Applicant:	Brighton and Hove City Council 1st Floor Hove Town Hall Hove		

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1. That the Committee has taken into consideration and agrees with the reasons for the recommendation set out below and resolves to **GRANT** planning permission subject to the following Conditions and Informatives:

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings listed below.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Plan Type	Reference	Version	Date Received
Location Plan			17-Dec-25
Existing Drawing			17-Dec-25

2. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority retains the right to review unimplemented permissions.

3. The use hereby permitted shall not be carried out except between the hours of 07:00 and 20:00 on Mondays to Sundays, including Bank or Public Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby occupiers and the locality and to comply with policies DM20 and DM40 of Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 2.

4. No new external lighting shall be installed until a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be

lit will not disturb or prevent sensitive species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Reason: Many species active at night (e.g. bats and badgers) are sensitive to light pollution. The introduction of artificial light might mean such species are disturbed and /or discouraged from using their breeding and resting places, established flyways or foraging areas. Such disturbance can constitute an offence under relevant wildlife legislation, and would be contrary to Policy DM37 of Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 2.

5. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of appropriate signage on the public highway at the rail bridge on Queensdown School Road shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved signage shall be fully implemented and made available for use prior to the first occupation of the development and shall thereafter be retained at all times.

Reason: To ensure safe access for all road users and to comply with policies CP9 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One, and DM33 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part Two.

6. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of secure cycle parking facilities for the occupants of, and visitors to, the development shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved facilities shall be fully implemented and made available for use prior to the first occupation of the development and shall thereafter be retained for use at all times.

Reason: To ensure that satisfactory facilities for the parking of cycles are provided and to encourage travel by means other than private motor vehicles and to comply with policy DM33 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part Two.

7. The site shall not be occupied until a scheme of Travel Plan measures to promote sustainable transport to and from the site has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Scheme should include, but not be limited to, the following measures:

- The provision of up-to-date public transport information within the building and to users of the building:
- Promotion of sustainable travel for staff and centre user trips including a range of bicycle workshops and training for centre users
- Sustainable transport promotional material being readily available to staff, centre users and visitors including cycle and bus routes and a schedule of sustainable travel activities and events.

The above works shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the building and thereafter be maintained as such.

Reason: To ensure the development maintains a sustainable transport strategy and to comply with policies CP9 of the City Plan Part One and DM33 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part Two.

Informatives:

1. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SS1 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One the approach to making a decision on this planning application has been to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Local Planning Authority seeks to approve planning applications which are for sustainable development where possible.

2. Biodiversity Net Gain

Based on the information available, this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply. These can be found in the Environment Act 2021.

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that, unless an exception or a transitional arrangement applies, the planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (“the biodiversity gain condition”) that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

2. SITE LOCATION

- 2.1. The application relates to Homewood College, a complex of one and two storey buildings in a secluded wooded valley at the far end of Queensdown School Road. Formerly a specialist school for children aged 11-16 with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, the school ceased operation at the end of 2024 and the site has been vacant since, with all previous students moved to other SEMH facilities. It is understood that pupil numbers had been declining in recent years, with circa 35 pupils in the final academic year of the school.
- 2.2. The site is located within the designated Urban Fringe, and the outdoor parts of the site are designated Open Space as ‘School Grounds and Sports Pitches’. The site is also located within a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Nature Improvement Area (NIA) and is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Three sides of the site boundary adjoin the South Downs National Park.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

None identified.

4. APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

- 4.1. Planning permission is sought for a change of use of the site from a school (use class F.1) to community hub for charities (use class F.2) for a temporary period of 6 years.

- 4.2. No external alterations are proposed. Within the existing building, there would be a mixture of administration spaces, workshops, and the potential for ancillary café and retail elements. Specific prospective occupiers are not within the scope of the planning application but are understood to include charities working with vulnerable people as well as timber recycling/restoration.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1. **One (1)** letter of objection, summarised as follows:
- Disturbance to wildlife
 - Risk of accidents on single-width access
- 5.2. Full details of representations received can be found online on the planning register.

6. CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1. **Children and Young Peoples Trust:** No comment received

Environmental Health: Seek further information

- 6.2. There does not seem to be any noise management plan included with the application. There is no information on:
- hours of operation
 - external noise limits for any external equipment (ie: new air conditioners, etc., if applicable)
 - amplified music/performances
 - waste/refuge management plan (if applicable.)
 - external lighting
 - odours (cooking, etc)
 - community use management plan
 - anti-social behaviour mitigation
 - limits/use on outdoor areas
- 6.3. **Planning Policy:** No objection
There are no policy objections since the community facility has been demonstrated to be surplus to requirements, and it will be replaced by an alternative community use in accordance with policy DM9 of the CPP2.
- 6.4. **Sports Facilities:** No comment received
- 6.5. **Sussex Police Community Safety:** No objection
- 6.6. **Sustainable Transport:** No objection.
Conditions should be attached relating to revised traffic signage on Queensdown School Road, to secure details of cycle parking, and to secure a scheme of Travel Plan measures to encourage sustainable travel.

7. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this decision has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Development Plan, and all other material planning considerations identified in the "Considerations and Assessment" section of the report
- 7.2. The development plan is:
- Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One (adopted March 2016);
 - Brighton & Hove City Plan Part Two (adopted October 2022);
 - East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Plan (adopted February 2013, revised October 2024);
 - East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Sites Plan (adopted February 2017);
 - Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan (adopted October 2019).

8. POLICIES

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One

SS1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CP9	Sustainable transport
CP10	Biodiversity

Brighton & Hove City Plan Part Two

DM9	Community Facilities
DM20	Protection of Amenity
DM33	Safe, Sustainable and Active Travel
DM37	Green Infrastructure and Nature Conservation

9. CONSIDERATIONS & ASSESSMENT

- 9.1. The main considerations in the determination of this application relate to the principle of the development, the impact on neighbouring amenity and transport matters.

Principle of Development:

- 9.2. Community facilities such as schools are protected under part 2 of Policy DM9 of the City Plan Part Two, which states that:
"Development that would lead to the loss of community facilities will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that at least one of the following circumstances applies:
- a) *replacement facilities of an appropriate quality and size will be provided as part of new development proposals or in an alternative suitable location that meets the criteria in part 1 of this policy; or*

- b) *the facility is no longer needed and suitable alternative provision with sufficient capacity is available in a location easily accessible to users of the facility; or*
- c) *the building or land is no longer suitable to accommodate the current use or an alternative suitable community use and cannot be reasonably adapted to do so; or*
- d) *it has been demonstrated that there is no current or future need or demand for the space, either in its current use or any alternative community use and evidence of active, flexible and appropriate marketing of the site for community use has been provided."*

9.3. In this case the school has already been declared surplus to requirements, and following the revocation of an Academisation Order by the Department of Education, the school was formally closed by the Council in December 2024. All students have been relocated to other SEMH facilities. It is therefore considered that criteria b) and d) would be met.

9.4. The proposed use as a hub for charities would be supported as an alternative community use of the building. Part 1 of Policy DM9 identifies three criteria against which proposals for new community facilities will be assessed:

- "a) the proposed use is compatible with adjoining and nearby uses;*
- b) the site is close to the community it serves and is readily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport; and*
- c) where feasible and appropriate, community facilities have been co-located to maximise their accessibility to residents and reduce the need for travel (for example at Community Hubs)."*

9.5. Given the relative seclusion of the site, the only close neighbour is the school caretaker's home to the southwest which itself is currently vacant, and the proposed use would not be incompatible with this. The site is accessible from Moulsecoomb Railway Station and local bus stops via Queensdown School Road. The proposed use is for a hub with multiple charities operating within the building. It is therefore considered that the proposed use would meet these requirements.

9.6. No loss of Open Space would take place and there would be no identified conflict with Policies CP16 or SA4 of the City Plan Part One.

9.7. Accordingly, no objection is raised to the proposals in principle.

Design and Appearance:

9.8. No external alterations are proposed.

Impact on Amenity:

9.9. Policy DM20 of the City Plan Part Two states that planning permission for any development or change of use will not be granted where it would cause material nuisance and loss of amenity to the proposed, existing and/or adjacent users, residents, occupiers or where it is liable to be detrimental to human health.

- 9.10. The closest neighbour to the site is the school caretaker's home, although this is currently also vacant, the next nearest sensitive uses being at a distance of some 100m or more on Lynchet Close, with significant land level differences and tree planting separating these neighbours from the site.
- 9.11. Whilst the comments of the Environmental Health team are noted, no significant impact on neighbouring amenity is anticipated as a result of the proposed development. The activities to be carried out on site as part of the proposed use as a hub for charities are unlikely to result in significantly more noise either on site or from comings and goings than the previous use as a school. The generous separation distances to the nearest neighbours would further mitigate any potential impact. It therefore would not be considered necessary to secure limits on the hours of use, restrictions on the use of outdoor spaces, or community/anti-social behaviour management plans. No external alterations are proposed, nor does any additional plant or lighting equipment form part of the scheme.
- 9.12. Although nuisance is considered to be unlikely, the Council would nevertheless retain the ability to investigate under Environmental Protection legislation if complaints of a statutory nuisance were to be received.

Sustainable Transport:

- 9.13. Access to the site is via Queensdown School Road, a narrow, mostly private single-width road with no pavement and a tunnel under the railway line. There is an alternative pedestrian access onto Queensdown School Road from Crespian Way, avoiding the railway tunnel. There are a small number of car parking spaces available on site.
- 9.14. The proposed change of use may result in some additional trips compared to the previous school use, however these are likely to be spread across the day and outside of peak hours. Although the access to the site is recognised as not being ideal, the site otherwise benefits from good sustainable transport links, with bus services on Lewes Road and Moulsecoomb Railway Station both within theoretical walking distance.
- 9.15. As requested by the Local Highways Authority (LHA), in order to mitigate for the potential safety concerns of the site access a scheme of cautionary traffic signage can be secured by condition. This is considered to be a proportionate measure, given the temporary nature of the proposed change of use and the likely considerable cost and disruption that would result from widening the tunnel under the railway.
- 9.16. The site currently proposed five car parking spaces, and two additional disabled car parking spaces. No comparison has been provided between the existing parking demand associated with the previous school use and the anticipated demand arising from the proposed temporary change of use. Notwithstanding this, in accordance with the comments of the LHA, it is considered unlikely that significant overspill parking would occur on the public highway, with displacement likely to take place within the site's car park or surrounding roads. There appear to be restrictions on the private access road, and whilst it is unclear

if this would remain the case in future, this should be a matter for the landowner (and temporary occupiers). A scheme of Travel Plan measures can be secured by condition to encourage sustainable travel to the site.

- 9.17. No details of cycle parking have been provided, and a condition can be attached to secure this.

Ecology

- 9.18. The site is ecologically sensitive, being located within a LNR and NIA and it is noted that public representations have raised concerns regarding impacts on local wildlife.

- 9.19. Although no physical alterations are proposed and the overall level of general noise and activity is unlikely to be significantly increased, it is considered that the proposed change of use does have the potential to result in some ecological impact due to changed patterns of activity on site. It is therefore considered necessary to attach conditions restricting the hours of use and precluding the installation of any new external lighting without first obtaining permission from the LPA.

Conclusion

- 9.20. The proposed temporary change of use is considered acceptable in principle, with the requirements of Policy DM9 of the City Plan Part Two being met. No significant concerns are held regarding a potential impact on neighbouring amenity, and whilst the pedestrian and vehicle access to the site is not ideal, this reflects the existing arrangement and on the basis of a proposed temporary use is considered unlikely to result in an unacceptable impact on highways safety, subject to the recommended conditions. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 9.21. This scheme was considered exempt from the need to secure mandatory biodiversity net gain under Schedule 7A of the TCPA because:
- It does not impact a priority habitat or habitat of more than 25sqm or 5m of linear habitat.

10. EQUALITIES

- 10.1. Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 provides:

- 1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 10.2. Officers considered the information provided by the applicant, together with the responses from consultees (and any representations made by third parties) and

determined that the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable material impact on individuals or identifiable groups with protected characteristics.

