

PLANNING STATEMENT

Highcroft Villas derelict electricity substation

Site: Former electricity substation to rear of Highcroft Villas, Brighton BN1 5PS

Proposal: Change of use from derelict electricity substation to form indoor personal recreation space (Sui Generis) with associated construction and alterations.

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Executive summary

This application relates to the defunct electricity substation site adjacent to the car parking at the rear of Highcroft Villas, Brighton. The application proposes the change of use (including construction of unit) to form indoor personal recreation space (Sui Generis).

For clarification, the proposed uses would be akin to uses which would reasonably be expected within a domestic outbuilding, normally incidental to a main dwelling (c3). These activities include, but are not limited to a home office, hobby craft and exercise space.

The need for facilities such as this has been apparent during the recent lockdowns where many individuals have struggled to find adequate space & privacy within their own dwelling for personal pursuits & hobbies that maintain their well-being.

A high-quality, 'low-key' design is proposed, in-keeping with the setting and with the intention of creating a discreet development. The design is fully compliant with NPPF130 (was 127), QD14 and DM18.

Regarding residential amenity, the proposal is fully compliant with QD27 and DM20. The development revitalises an existing, derelict site, and therefore immediately enhances the local built environment. The site is within a discreet location, beside a car parking area flanked by industrial units, the rear gardens of Highcroft Villas terrace, and the 6-storey Hillcroft Lodge apartment complex.

The development will, given its current derelict condition, represent an improved quality of environment and visual amenity, without detriment to the existing amenities.

The proposal accords with NPPF Overarching Objective 8b, to offer places and facilities that promote well-being, as well as policy objectives to make optimum effective use of available sites (130e) and accords with the spirit of HO5.

Given all of the above, we urge the LPA to issue approval without delay.

All drawings contained herein are property of Pivot Studio.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is in support of the application for a change of use of decommissioned electricity substation located to the rear of Highcroft Villas, Brighton, BN1 5PS. The application proposes the change of use (including construction of unit) into an indoor personal recreation space (Sui Generis).
- 1.2 The activities expected to take place are those which would normally be found (and would be permitted) within an outbuilding which forms part of a residential curtilage (C3). This would include, but are not limited to hobby craft, exercise space, home office etc.

Further details of proposed use / examples of use

- 1.3 The site is owned by the applicant, who requires the space as his residence does not benefit from appropriate amenity space. The applicant lives in flatted accommodation with his young family. The activities which would take place are akin to what would ordinarily take place in a domestic garage or outbuilding.
- 1.4 Currently the site is a disused brownfield space, comprising of an exterior timber fence and concrete posts enclosing an area of made ground. In its current derelict form, the site does not offer any benefit to the locality and appears a blight on the landscape.
- 1.5 This application proposes removal of the existing fencing and in its place the construction of a secure brick-walled unit with zinc roof.
- 1.6 An element of flexibility is required, and the types of activity envisaged to take place on the site are those that might otherwise take place within a residential outbuilding, as described above. Potential uses of the recreation space by the applicant, or future user, might include as an artist's studio, hobbies area, study, home office, shed, domestic garage or media room.
- 1.7 The recent pandemic-related lockdowns have forced whole households to remain indoors together for prolonged periods, often with only limited internal amenity space. This has made apparent the importance of personal privacy and having access to private amenity space where individuals can engage in personal pursuits that support their well-being. The proposal thus responds to a clear societal need for access to personal recreation space – whilst utilising brownfield land.

2 Relevant policy

- 2.1 The key areas of relevant policy relate to quality of design, residential amenity and the well-being of BHCC citizens.
- 2.2 There are no heritage considerations for this application.
- 2.3 The following policies are considered applicable to the assessment of this application.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.4 Within the NPPF (July 2021) as-a-whole the following paragraphs are of particular relevance to this application:
- 8b - Overarching objectives - meeting present social needs and supporting well-being;
 - 119 - making use of brownfield sites;
 - 120c - substantial weight for use of brownfield sites;
 - 130a, b, c, d - Good quality design, sympathetic to existing built environment;
 - 130e - Optimising the potential of each site;
 - 130f - Accessible developments that promote well-being.

Brighton and Hove City Plan Part 1

- 2.5 The following policies from the Brighton and Hove City Plan Part 1 are relevant to this application:
- SS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 - CP8 - Sustainable buildings;
 - CP10 - Biodiversity;
 - CP12 - Urban design.

Brighton and Hove Local Plan (retained policies March 2016)

- 2.6 The following policies from the Brighton and Hove Local Plan are relevant to this application:
- TR7 - Safe development;
 - TR14 - Cycle access and parking;
 - SU10 - Noise nuisance;
 - QD14 - Extensions and alterations;
 - QD27 - Protection of amenity;
 - HO5 - Provision of private amenity space in residential development.

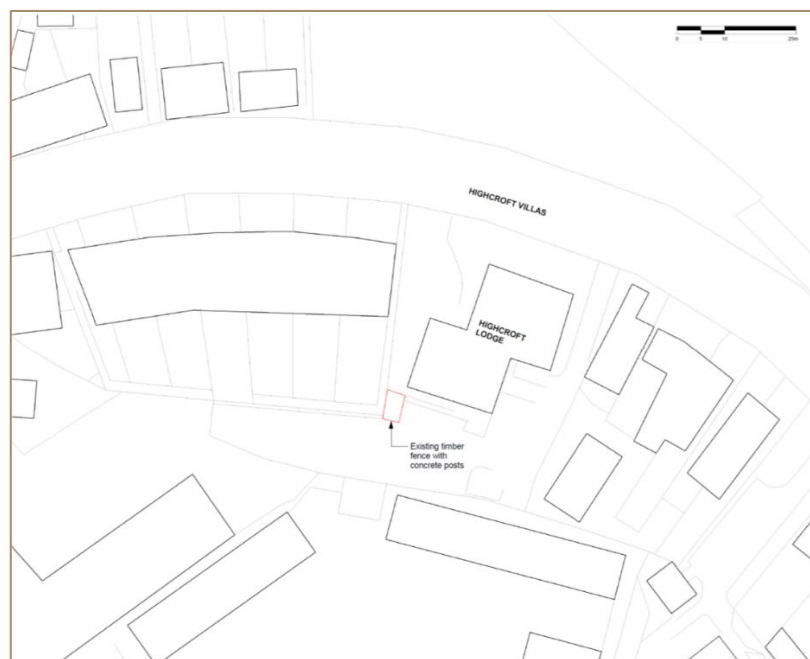
Emerging Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 2

2.7 We note that Policies in the Proposed Submission City Plan Part 2 do not carry full statutory weight but are gathering weight as the Plan proceeds through its stages. They provide an indication of the direction of future policy. Since 23 April 2020, when the Plan was agreed for submission to the Secretary of State, it has gained weight for the determination of planning applications. The following policies from the Brighton and Hove City Plan Part 2 are therefore considered relevant:

- DM18 - High-quality design and places;
- DM20 - Protection of amenity;
- DM21 - Extensions and alterations.

3 Site context

- 3.1 The immediate area of the proposal site is mixed residential and industrial. The character is mixed use suburban and includes modern buildings, in addition to more traditional such as the terraces on Highcroft Villas.
- 3.2 The site is located to the rear of Hillcroft Villas, with terraced properties to the immediate north-west and the 6-storey Hillcroft Lodge apartment complex to the immediate north-east. The western side of the site is adjoining to the rear garden boundary of the eastern property on Highcroft Villas, whilst the northern side of the site is adjoining to the boundary for Hillcroft Lodge. See site location plan and aerial images below.
- 3.3 The southern and eastern sides of the site are immediately adjoining to a car parking area which is itself flanked to the south by industrial units.
- 3.4 Numerous large flat-roofed sheds of comparable size to the proposal are seen at the end of the terrace gardens and within the car park itself.
- 3.5 The site is not within a conservation area and there are not any listed buildings within the immediate locality.



Above: Site location plan.



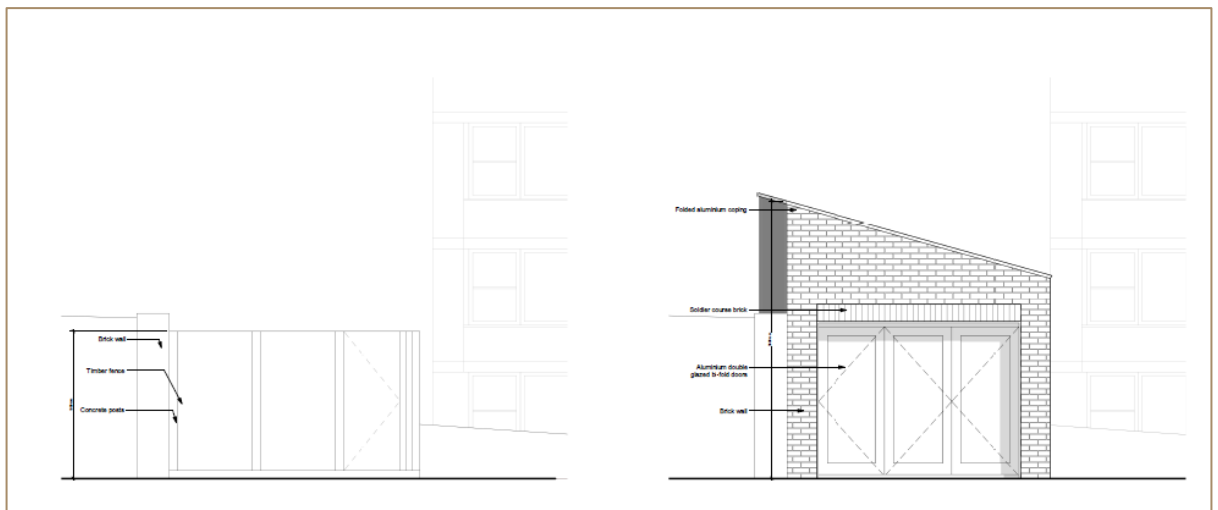
Above: Aerial view to NW (© Google). Yellow arrow indicates the location of the site.



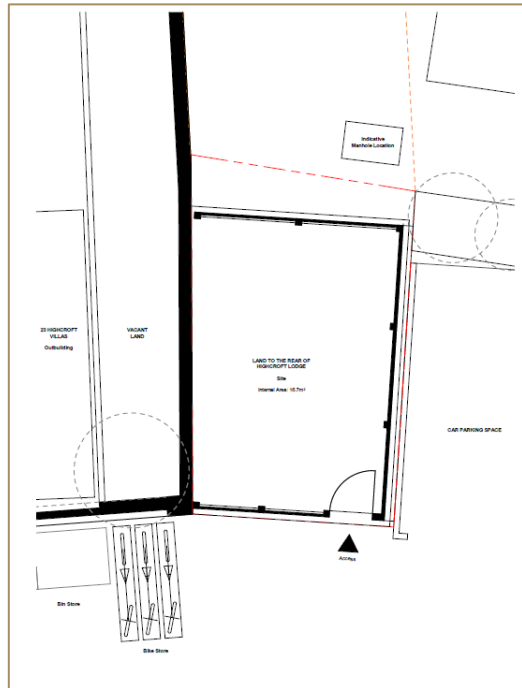
Above: Aerial view to NE (© Google). Yellow arrow indicates site.

4 The proposal

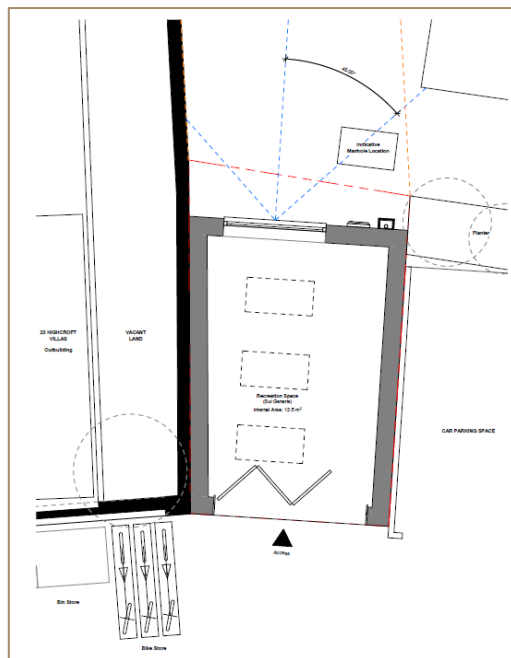
- 4.1 The application proposes the change of use of the land and construction of building to form indoor personal recreation space (Sui Generis).
- 4.2 The existing wooden panel fencing and concrete fence posts would be removed. A brick-walled unit would be erected to match the footprint of the existing fencing (approx. 12.0 m²).
- 4.3 The western side of the unit would be adjoining the boundary of a residential property on Highcroft Villas, as it is currently. The southern side facing the car park would have a large sideways-sliding folding access door. The eastern side, also adjoining the car park, would be solid uninterrupted brickwork.
- 4.4 The zinc roof would slope moderately towards the east. 3no. small obscure-glazed rooflight windows will be present to enhance internal daylight.
- 4.5 The eaves on the eastern side of the unit would be marginally higher than the existing fence.



- 4.6 A brick finish is proposed to the walls, in keeping with numerous buildings in the immediate area.



Above: Existing site floor plan.



Above: Proposed site floor plan.



Above: Street scene with indicative rendering of the completed proposed development.

5 Assessment of the proposal

Principle of development

- 5.1 This application proposes the redevelopment of a currently derelict site within an area characterised by residential dwellings and so we expect that continued residential related use is acceptable from the outset. The proposed use of the development would be similar to the use of large sheds already present at the end of the terrace gardens of Highcroft Villas.
- 5.2 We further expect that redevelopment of a brownfield site will also be acceptable from the outset, in full accordance with Paragraphs 119 & 120b (utilising brownfield sites) of the NPPF (2021).
- 5.3 The site is considered to be fully sustainable for the proposed use. The location is easily accessed by road and is only a short walk from several nearby bus stops on Dyke Road.

Design / Visual amenity

- 5.4 The proposal would clearly improve the character of the locality and introduce additional architectural interest where none exists.
- 5.5 The proposal would be constructed to a high build quality including finishing materials.
- 5.6 The 'low-key' but attractive design fits well with the intention that this should be a relatively discreet development and does not seek to act as a focal point.
- 5.7 The scale would be in-keeping with the numerous large sheds already present at the end of the terrace gardens, including immediately adjacent to the proposal site, and other locations flanking the car park.
- 5.8 The development would be completely subservient to the surrounding built form.
- 5.9 The design is therefore fully compliant with NPPF Paragraph 130 (was 127) (design quality), Local Plan Retained Policy QD14 (quality of design for alterations to existing buildings) and Emerging City Plan Part 2 DM18 (design quality).

Impact on existing amenity

General use

- 5.10 Due to the proposed use of the development (for activities normally found within a residential outbuilding) and due to the location of the site, there would not be any impacts on the existing amenities in the area (residential amenity or otherwise). As noted previously, the proposed use would be similar to the use of large sheds already present at the end of the terrace gardens.
- 5.11 It is noted that in the unlikely event that any disturbance or nuisance should arise, this would be addressed via legislation outside of planning.
- 5.12 Should the LPA deem it necessary to attach any mitigating conditions in relation to the proposal, the applicant welcomes pragmatic discussion with the LPA.

Overbearing, overshadowing and daylight

- 5.13 The proposed unit is similar in both plan and massing in comparison to what already exists. Accordingly, there would not be any notable impacts on the existing residential amenities by way of overbearing, overshadowing or impact on daylight.
- 5.14 The proposal incorporates a sloped roof, dipping to the east. Thus, the east-facing side, closest to the nearest neighbouring property in Hillcroft Lodge incorporates only a very modest height increase relative to the existing fencing.
- 5.15 The sloping roof design mitigates the adjacent first floor flat of the Hillcroft Lodge from any impact on daylight and sunlight. It would also result in an effectively negligible impact on the adjacent ground floor flat, due to the minimal height increase of the wall closest to the flat when compared to the existing fencing.

Privacy

- 5.16 Due to the orientation and position of the windows, there would not be any privacy impacts.
- 5.17 There are no east-facing windows proposed on the ground floor.

Natural surveillance and active frontage

- 5.18 The unit will introduce an additional element of natural surveillance and active frontage directly adjacent to the public domain, and at ground floor level.

Parking

- 5.19 It is expected that this proposal would have a negligible impact on parking in the area.
- 5.20 We note there are numerous developments within the locality which have been accepted as 'car free'. This is due to the accessible and sustainable location. We expect this approach shall continue to be adopted to the proposed development.
- 5.21 Parking in the area is also controlled by legislation outside of planning.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed development would bring a welcome new use to a currently derelict brownfield site which is in a sustainable location.
- 6.2 The proposal would create a beneficial indoor recreational space, which is a sought-after facility in current times and a demand has been identified for the foreseeable future.
- 6.3 The overall setting to the rear of Highcroft Villas is discreet and the proposal would be completely subservient to the adjacent apartment complex, terraced dwellings and industrial units.
- 6.4 The design is high quality and fully appropriate to the setting, adding architectural interest to the location without over-prominence. Further, the proposal would result in increased surveillance and active frontage.
- 6.5 The unit would be contained within the footprint of the existing fence and with a sloping roof design, leading to an effectively neutral impact on daylight and sunlight for adjacent properties, and with no overbearing impact.
- 6.6 The orientation and positioning of the fenestration would prevent any privacy impacts on the adjacent residential properties.
- 6.7 Accordingly, the proposal is considered to be compliant with all of the relevant policies of the Local Development Plan and the forthcoming City Plan Part 2. As such, we respectfully request that the LPA move to approve this application without delay.
- 6.8 Should the assessing officer wish to discuss any aspect of this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact CMK Planning info@cmkplanning.com

