Development Management – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0313/25 Recommendation: REFUSE

Site: Part Land Of Garage Block Access And Garage West Of 27 And 27A Underdown Road, Southwick, West Sussex

Proposal:Change of Use of garage used as store to dwelling house including addition of mezzanine floor as a sleeping platform with shower room, kitchen and living area below.

Date of Site Visit: 7th April 2025

Neighbours Checked: Y

Additional neighbour notification: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application site is an existing detached pitched roof garage building which is currently used for storage and is under separate ownership. It is to the rear of 27 Underdown Road an end of terrace property which is divided into two flats, nos. 27 and 27A. The first floor flat has its entrance to the rear of the property where there is associated amenity space which borders the application side and rear elevation of the garage.

The front of the garage to the west opens onto an area where there are garage blocks at single storey, workshops and a two storey residential building. There is access to the garage and this courtyard area from Underdown Road alongside no. 27.

Permission is sought to convert and change the use of the garage to a new dwelling with living space at ground floor. An open plan studio area, kitchen, lounge, living space combined with shower room on ground floor and the addition of a mezzanine sleeping platform above. Changes to the building include rooflights, window and a door to the south/side elevation onto the access. Rear (west) facing glazed double doors new tiled roof to match no. 27 and cladding to the gable.

The existing two storey building, 25A Underdown Road, to the rear of the site within the courtyard area was previously a workshop then was used as residential. Retrospective consent was granted for its use as residential under AWDM/1043/23 with consent also for one of the garage buildings as a workshop. The garages in the garage block (as with the application site) are understood to be used for storage use rather than for parking.

Consultations:

West Sussex County Council: The Highways Authority: -

The proposal is for the conversion of an existing garage/workshop into a studio flat. The site is located on Underdown Road, a residential D classified road subject to 30mph speed restrictions. The site is accessed via a private access, not maintained by WSCC. The Local Highway Authority (LHA) has reviewed data supplied to WSCC by Sussex Police over a period of the last five years. There have been no recorded injury accidents at the junction with the public highway. There is no evidence to suggest that the access is operating unsafely, or that the proposed change of use would exacerbate an existing safety concern.

The access serves a number of other garages and a parking area. There are no proposed changes to the site access from Underdown Road. The proposal will generate the requirement for 1 additional parking space, and the proposals will also incur the loss of a potential single parking space, although the applicant outlines that the garage is used as a store. Any associated parking therefore generated by the host and proposed properties will need to be accommodated by either on street parking or sustainable alternatives to the use of a car. This would be considered acceptable and would not be anticipated to cause any concerns from a highways safety perspective. On street parking is an existing practice along Underdown Road, and there are no known highways safety or capacity concerns with this practice. The LPA may wish to consider the matter of parking from an amenity perspective however.

Cycle parking is proposed to serve the new dwelling. This should be provided in the form of a secure and covered arrangement in order to make this means a more desirable form of travel.

Regular Bus services are available nearby, serving Old Shoreham Road and Kingston Lane. Shoreham railway station is located a 15minute walk from the site, or 3 minutes by bicycle. It is therefore concluded that this further alleviates the reliance on the use of a private car for the proposed development.

The Local Highway Authority does not consider that the proposal for a single dwelling would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in ‘severe’ cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Cycle parking

No part of the development shall be first occupied until covered and secure cycle parking spaces have been provided in accordance with plans and details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: To provide alternative travel options to the use of the car in accordance with current sustainable transport policies.

Southern Water: - Southern Water requires a formal application for a connection to the public sewer to be made by the applicant or developer.
Following informative should be attached to any consent: -
Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul sewerage and surface water disposal have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water. The Council's technical staff and the relevant authority for land drainage consent should comment on the adequacy of the proposals to discharge surface water to the local watercourse.

WSP Drainage Consultants: - The site may be at risk of surface water flooding. Therefore, we recommend the applicant provide a Flood Risk Assessment that demonstrates the risk of flooding from surface water, safe access and egress and mitigation measures. We would recommend the application is not approved until updated information is received that addresses the above points.

Adur and Worthing Councils: Environmental Health: - No adverse comments for this application.

Representations: - 2 objections received from the owner/occupiers of nos. 27 and 27A Underdown Road.

- Impact of noise disturbance, privacy and health impact
- Construction work will create significant noise and disturbance as the property is attached and overlooks the garage.
- Working from home will be affected.
- Access will be affected during construction and scaffolding.
- The windows onto the side access have a detrimental impact upon the future residents.
- The increased use of the access could cause safety concerns.
- Impact on traffic flow and road safety.
- Construction could inhibit traffic.
- Asbestos could harm neighbouring properties with contamination.
- Negative impact of home and office environment, privacy and overall amenity.

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policy 15, 18, 22, 28, 34, 36

‘Supplementary Planning Guidance’ comprising: Development Management Standard No. 1 ‘Space Around New Dwellings and Flats.”
National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
WSCC Guidance on Parking at New Developments (Sept 2020).
Technical Housing Standards - nationally described space standards (DCLG 2015)

Planning Assessment

Principle

The relevant issues are the effects on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers and future occupiers of the proposed residential unit, the effect on the character and appearance of the area, highway matters and flood risk.

Visual amenity

The building is already present on site and appears to require upgrading. The proposed re tiling of the roof and cladding with addition of openings would not in visual terms be harmful. The building is only visible within the courtyard and from neighbouring buildings. It is not visible from Underdown Road except when viewed directly from the street toward the access where glimpses are possible. It would not be a prominent feature. The proposed external changes would therefore not be harmful in this case in visual terms.

Residential Amenity, Existing Occupiers.

Some objections have been received from the occupiers of the flats directly adjacent to the site to the east. These mainly relate to the construction process, which could be managed to avoid any harm to adjacent occupiers, however during construction some noise and disturbance to adjacent occupiers is inevitable.

The rear elevation of the building, although forming the boundary of no. 27 is a blank elevation and the proposed plans show this to remain as such. However the roof lights when open may lead to some impact, however this is likely to be limited and not unusual in residential locations such as this where houses and gardens are in close proximity. Safeguarding conditions could also be attached here as necessary. There would be no harm to any existing, adjacent residential properties which would warrant a refusal in this case.

Residential Amenity, Future Occupiers

The space provided within the unit is limited with open plan living space at ground floor, to include cycle storage and a mezzanine sleeping area above. 41 square metres of space is provided. The Internal Space Standards state that a single storey dwelling with a shower room can provide a minimum of 37 square metres and two

storey a minimum of 58 Square metres. Although it could be argued that the space standards are met, the quality of the space provision is considered to be poor. Outlook is also limited with rooflights only in the sleeping area and the side windows and door are onto the vehicular access. The building abuts the narrow access road with no set back and it is likely that future occupants would suffer from noise and loss of privacy as a result. There would be the option to obscure glaze the side windows however this would limit outlook further. The unit has no external amenity space.

This is considered to be an unsuitable use in this building giving rise to a sub standard residential unit with no amenity space, abutting adjacent properties and an access road, with limited outlook and likely noise impact which is considered harmful to future occupiers.

The applicant's agent has made reference to the approval mentioned above where retrospective consent was given for a residential unit on the other side of the courtyard, AWDM/1043/23. It is considered that these differ and the former does not justify approving a similar use here. It is a larger property and has outbuildings attached which are also used in connection with the main house. There is amenity space provision and both the property and garden are not adjacent to the main vehicular access route into the courtyard. The former scheme has a much better living environment provision for current and future occupiers.

Flood Risk

The application site is at risk of surface water flooding. The NPPF states that planning authorities must not allow inappropriate more vulnerable development within flood risk area, mitigate against impact, not increase flooding elsewhere and allow for safe access and egress. The Council’s drainage consultants have asked for a Flood Risk Assessment that demonstrates the risk of flooding from surface water, safe access and egress and mitigation measures. This has not been forthcoming and it is likely that these issues cannot be addressed. The first floor sleeping arrangement would give rise to the potential for a person to be trapped at first floor in the event of a flood with no egress from the building. This would be contrary to the NPPF and would be a ground for refusal in this case.

Highway Matters

The submitted plans show cycle storage within the living space of the proposed dwelling. There is no vehicular parking provision, West Sussex County Council do not consider this to be of concern due to the sustainable location of the site within close proximity to services, amenities and transport links. There is parking available on the street if required which would not lead to highway safety concerns.

Recommendation

REFUSE

1. The site lies in an area of high risk to surface water flooding. Insufficient information has been provided to satisfy the Local Planning Authority that the future occupiers of the proposed development would be able to safely exit the building in the event of surface water flooding therefore exposing them to the risk of flooding. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 15 and 36 of the Adur Local Plan, the PPG on Flood Risk and Coastal Change and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.

2. Due to the combination of the limited internal space and outlook, poor layout, proximity to the access road and lack of amenity space the development would give rise to a substandard level of residential accommodation. This would therefore be detrimental to the future occupiers of the dwelling and contrary to Policy 15 of the Adur Local Plan and the NPPF.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation N

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.

Case Officer: Hannah Barker Date: 19th May 2025

Authorised by: Peter Barnett Date: 20 May 2025