Exp 15/5

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: ADC/0110/09 Recommendation - APPROVE

Site: **Western Lodge, Western Road**
Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5WD

Proposal: **Change of use of office on east side to a one-bedroom dwelling**

The Application

The application site is a vacant two-storey office building annexed onto the east side of Western Lodge which lies on the south side of Western Road. The building has been extended to include a first floor level (SU/6/02/TP) and pitched roof and has front (north-facing) windows only. It sits recessed back from the main frontage to Western Lodge, with a hardstanding capable of accommodating two vehicles in front. It borders the Lloyds TSB bank to the east with the Post Office yard and outbuildings to the rear.

Permission is now sought to convert the building from use as offices to a one-bedroom dwelling, a previous application for a two-bedroom dwelling having been refused because of a deficient standard of amenity, its floor area being below the Council's standard for a two-bedroom flat, it lacking a double bedroom and having a solely northerly aspect (ADC/0479/08).

No external alterations are proposed. Internally, the ground floor is shown as an open-plan living room/kitchen/stairs, plus a separate entrance lobby and a WC. The first floor has one bedroom and a separate bathroom, with the stairs partitioned from it. The existing openings that connect the building directly with Western Lodge are to be blocked.

Consultations and Representations

West Sussex County Council: No objection, as vehicular traffic would not be intensified. No TAD is required.

Environmental Health Officer: No objection.

Adur District Conservation Advisory Group: No objection.

Third Parties: No comments received.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, ERA1, CH4, DEV1, DEV4-5

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AS1, AE5-6, AH2, AH5, AH9 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising: Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions' Revised West Sussex Parking Standards and Transport Contributions Methodology (WSCC 2003 and ADC 2004)
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005)
PPS3 'Housing' (DCLG 2006)
PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres' (ODPM 2005)

Planning Assessment

Policies

The Structure Plan gives significant weight to making the best use of land through higher density residential development provided that the impact on the character of the area and environment is acceptable (LOC1, ERA1, CH1) and subject to policy DEV1 requiring high quality development. CH4 requires Conservation Areas to be preserved and, where possible, enhanced. NE1 requires the provision of new residential developments of sizes, types and tenures to suit the varied needs of local households and to minimise the need to develop greenfield sites. DEV4 states (amongst other things) that development should not be permitted unless the travel needs it generates are met. DEV5 states that "Development should not be permitted unless the level of parking is compatible with the need to avoid environmental or safety problems and the need is to encourage walking, cycling and the use of passenger transport where this is or can be a realistic alternative".

Policy AH9 of the Local Plan, although relating to the conversion of dwellinghouses rather than other buildings into flats, is of some relevance. It refers to the needs for access and car parking provision to be acceptable; for there not to be an unacceptable adverse effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking or noise transmission through party walls; and for the standard of accommodation to be provided accord with adopted standards. Similarly, Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions' although not directly applicable is also of some relevance. It states, among other criteria, that any conversion should be capable of producing self-contained flats of adequate total size and with individual rooms of sufficient size, and satisfactory internal arrangement. Living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens should all have adequate natural light. It is also essential that at least the living room has a reasonable outlook. Flats in which all windows are north facing should be avoided as direct sunlight in rooms would be limited.

PPS3 gives no specific guidance on flat conversions except for the general statement that "conversions of existing housing can provide an important source of new housing" (para 31) but it encourages the best use of urban land for housing development, particularly affordable housing and a mixture of types to create a balanced community, at higher densities (avoiding developments at less than 30 dwellings per hectare) and without rigid application of parking and amenity space standards. PPS6 also encourages residential provision within town centres.

Principle of use

The site lies just within the area identified for shopping use under policy AS1 (with office uses also permissible where appropriate under AE5-6). It is not considered that the loss of office floorspace by conversion of this annex building will be detrimental to the vitality of the shopping or commercial area of the town centre. The annex is currently vacant and, according to the applicant/owner, no office users have been found for it over a period in excess of 9 months, local agents referring to an almost total lack of demand and to there being about 900sqm of vacant space available in central Shoreham. The attached larger offices of Western Lodge are to remain. Western Road is, in any case, a mainly residential street and the conversion of offices opposite under SU/132/01 was approved under this premise. The proposal would make beneficial use of this empty annex and, in principle, is considered acceptable.

Residential Amenity

The main concern is the living conditions that the proposed dwelling would afford to its occupants. Although there are no specific policies in the local plan regarding conversions of buildings to single houses, policy AH9 and DC Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions' refer to adequate total floor area with individual rooms of sufficient size and an acceptable outlook.

The gross internal floor area of the building is 55 square metres. This is significantly more than the 45sqm minimum recommended for a one-bedroom flat under DC Standard No.4. The bedroom has a floor area of 20sqm which is greatly in excess of the DC minimum standard of 11sqm for a double bedroom. The open-plan livingroom/kitchen on the ground floor has an area of 22sqm which is slightly above the DC standard combined minimum of 19.5sqm (14sqm for livingroom plus 5.5sqm for kitchen).

In terms of outlook and light, the only windows serving the dwelling are those on the northern (front) elevation. There will thus be no direct sunlight into the 2 habitable rooms in the building although daylighting should be adequate given the size of the windows.

Externally, the only space is the 6m by 6m forecourt area. The DC standard No.4 refers to a minimum amenity space of 20sqm for a flat. This could be provided on the forecourt parking area but would have no privacy unless enclosed by a wall and would be overshadowed by the adjacent building. However, other flats have been allowed in the town centre without any significant amenity space, including the conversion directly opposite (SU/132/01) and rebuilt building to the rear (SU/111/04). It is thus considered that the lack of private amenity space is not sufficient to warrant refusal.

Access and Parking

The front hardstanding currently provides parking spaces, including for the adjacent offices at Western Lodge. The plans appear to indicate that this will

be allocated to the proposed dwelling and will afford space for 2 cars. This is more than the maximum standard on one space for a one-bedroom dwelling and exceeds what is necessary in this town centre location close to public transport and facilities. However, WSCC have raised no objection and do not require a sustainable transport contribution under the Revised West Sussex Parking Standards and Transport Contributions Methodology (as there should be no increase in traffic compared to the existing office use).

Visual Amenity

The proposal does not include any external alterations to the building or the surrounding site in general and will thus not impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Other Matters

The proposal does not indicate where bin storage facilities will be sited in relation to the building and hardstanding. This can, however, be required by condition as there is space on the forecourt area.

Recommendation

APPROVE for reason that:-

The proposed development is within the built-up area and would help meet the need for additional housing without detracting from existing local urban environment. It can take place without detriment to the Conservation Area or to nearby properties and without detraction from highway safety. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AS1, AE5-6, AH2, AH5, AH9) and the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (LOC1, NE1, CH4, ERA1, DEV1, DEV4-5)

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci
2. C8Bi amended ...not be occupied as a dwelling until a secure covered cycle parking space has been provided in .....LPA and it shall not thereafter be used for any other purpose. A minimum of one car parking space shall also be retained at all times on the forecourt area.
3. C18J .....until a refuse bin enclosure has been constructed in accordance with detailed.....

Case Officer:.. [redacted] Date:.....