Expiry Date - 15/07/2024

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0650/24 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: STREET RECORD Forest Barn Mews Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Installation of new Package Sewerage Treatment Plant for 1-6 Forest Barn Mews (retrospective application)

Date of site visit: Various. Last visited for AWDM/0183/24 (Forest Barn) and AWEN/0022/24 (with VG)

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Site and Surroundings

The application relates to Forest Barn Mews, a complex of 6no 1½-storey rustic-style dwellings and associated parking 'barns' built around a courtyard dating from c.2005. The complex is accessed via a remote-controlled gate at the southern end of Forest Lane which opens into an enclosed parking area with a further remote-controlled gate in the southwest corner leading into the courtyard complex.

The gated parking area also provides the only means of access to Forest Barn, a 2-storey detached dwelling converted from a former agricultural building c.1980. The curtilage of Forest Barn is separated from the adjoining parking area by fencing, with the building set-back behind a front garden approximately 16m deep. The dwelling is currently vacant and uninhabitable with some windows removed; the remains of the attached rear outbuilding having been demolished earlier this year.

Forest Lane comprises an unmade private lane running roughly north-south linking to the A27 via Castle Goring Way at its northern end.

A hedgerow (running roughly north-south) borders the parking area to the east, beyond which is a seasonal stream also running north-south. The West Durrington Urban Extension lies beyond the stream to the east, including a landscape 'buffer' and new dwellings within Gladiolus Grove.

Forest Lane is a public right of way (3127/2) which continues south and eastwards via a network of footpaths included within the West Durrington Development.

The site lies within the built-up area boundary. Fields immediately to the west of Forest Barn Mews and Forest Lane as well as dwellings within Castle

Goring Way are within the South Downs National Park and the designated Castle Goring Conservation Area.

Proposal

Full planning permission is sought retrospectively for the installation of a Klargester Biodisc Package Sewage Treatment Plant serving 1-6 Forest Barn Mews.

The current application follows an enforcement investigation under AWEN/0058/24.

The Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the application explains:

The new sewage treatment plant has replaced a previous sewage treatment plant (Titan 40) that was located in the far south eastern corner of the complex, to the south of Forest Barn. The latter served 1-6 Forest Barn Mews and Forest Barn.

The former sewage treatment plant suffered a number of technical failures and instances of excessive odours necessitating a temporary system to be put into place following the wet Winter of 2022.

An application was made to the relevant utility provider for Forest Barn Mews to be connected to the new public foul sewer installed to serve the nearby West Durrington development, but this was declined by ICOSA as not meeting the minimum requirement for connection to their network.

The decision was made to install a new small wastewater treatment system sited in the car park of Forest Barn Mews, a more convenient location for maintenance and emptying.

The treatment plant (2.45m wide by 3.34m long) sits just below the shingled surface of the car park. The GRP cover is visible and protected within the car park by a low timber rail. Access for maintenance and emptying is from the A27 via Forest Lane as before. The new location is considered to be more convenient, allowing a maintenance van and the ‘tankering’ vehicle to park immediately adjacent to the unit within the car park.

The treatment plant is connected to the pre-existing drainage system of Forest Barn Mews. The final treated effluent discharges via an outfall pipe into the adjacent stream. It is anticipated sludge removal would take place every 4-6 months.

The replacement sewage treatment plant was approved conditionally under the Building Regulations (AWBC/0747/23) and a Completion Certificate issued in November 2023.

Relevant Planning History:

WB/05/0713/FULL Erection of six dwellings arranged around a courtyard with garaging and car parking, improvements to vehicular access and retention of existing farm house (Resubmission of WB/04/01306/FULL). Approved and implemented.

Consultations:

Environment Agency: No objection.

WSP: No objection.

Adur and Worthing Councils:

Environmental Health (Public Health & Regulation): No adverse comments.

Representations: None received.

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan policies (WBC 2023): SP1, DM5, DM22
National Planning Policy Framework (DLUHC 2023)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Assessment

In the interests of sustainable development, the preference would be for this existing group of (formerly isolated) dwellings to now be connected to the new foul water drainage infrastructure serving the adjacent West Durrington development. However, the Applicant has confirmed that a request for connection has been declined. In the absence of a realistic alternative, there is no objection in principle to the recently installed small wastewater treatment plant which has replaced a faulty, and since decommissioned, similar small sewage treatment plant that previously served Forest Barn Mews and Forest Barn. The latter dating from the development of Forest Barn Mews c.2005.

At the time of the last officer site visit in January 2024 the former sewage treatment plant remained in situ to the south of Forest Barn, but is understood to have since been removed. [Forest Barn, including the site of the previous sewage treatment plant, is not within the ‘red line’ of the current application area. The connection of Forest Barn to the new system is a private matter between the respective parties.]

The key considerations are the effects on visual and residential amenity.

Visual Amenity

The cover of the installed treatment plant sits approximately 0.4m above the surface of the enclosed private parking area within which is it located, protected by a low, timber rail fence. It is visible from within the car park itself, and from the front of Forest Barn, but is not intrusive or unsightly and has no adverse impacts on the visual amenity of the area.

Residential Amenity

It is known that odours emanating from the previous, faulty, treatment plant were a source of inconvenience to nearby adjoining residents.

The owner's handbook accompanying the current application, stipulates that the treatment plant should normally be sited a minimum distance of 15 metres from any residential dwelling. This requirement has been met by the new location. The new location also enables more convenient access for maintenance and sludge removal compared to the previous treatment plant which had no direct vehicle access.

Although some odour is inevitable during sludge removal, the installed replacement, modern, wastewater treatment system with improved accessibility should result in an overall improvement in odour nuisance for nearby residents compared to the previous faulty treatment plant.

Other

The Environment Agency has raised no objection on environmental or water pollution grounds, but has pointed out that a Licence is required for the installed wastewater treatment plant. This can form the subject of an informative to the Applicant.

The views of the Highway Authority have not been sought since in terms of construction management the treatment plant has already been installed, and the means of access from Forest Lane for maintenance/de-sludging remains the same as for the pre-existing plant.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers

Informative

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.

Expiry Date - 15/07/2024

Environment Agency

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Jo Morin Date: 10.07.2024

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 10 July 2024