Expiry Date - 24/06/2010

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: ADC/0156/10 **Recommendation – Refuse Application**

Site: **2 New Cottages Coombes Road Coombes Lancing**

Proposal: **Change of use of part of field at rear to form part of garden for domestic horticulture, retention of 3 buildings and erection of greenhouse (part retrospective)**

The Application

The application site consists of part of a field to the south and east of 2 New Cottages. Part of the field has been enclosed by fencing for use by the occupiers of 2 New Cottages for domestic horticulture. Three buildings have been erected on the site and there is a hardstanding in place for a greenhouse. The buildings consist of a prefabricated garage, which has been moved from within the curtilage to the site because of a proposed extension at the side of the cottage, and two sheds all of which have been placed on concrete bases. The three buildings are sited close to the entrance to the field, to the south of the garden, while the base for the proposed greenhouse is on the boundary with the western end of the garden.

The site measures 33m by 29m (approximately 737sqm (0.07ha)) in area and is L-shaped, wrapping around the rear garden of 2 New Cotts, but remains separate from the garden by the retention of the existing garden boundary fence. The site lies within the National Park and is outside any defined built up area boundary. It forms part of a larger holding which is triangular in shape and runs to the north and east of the cottage.

The adjoining half of the semi detached pair of cottages, No.1 New Cottages, to the north has also recently extended its curtilage and an application is awaited.

Consultations and Representations

Consultations/Comments

South Downs National Park Authority – Object. The extended area of garden is very large relative to the original curtilage, appearing to be approximately the same size again. It is also very visible in this open landscape, as are the three buildings, which appear as rather stark and incongruous, particularly the concrete panel building. Consider that these, and the extended garden area, detract from the character and appearance of the

locality. Note that a hedge around the extended area has been planted/is proposed, which will provide some screening, but it will take a while to become established and could itself appear incongruous, emphasising that the garden has been carved out of the field. Action should be taken to secure the removal of the buildings and the restoration of the land to agriculture.

Third Parties

2 letters of objection received from the occupiers of The Den and Little Den, Coombes Road:

- Design, appearance and use of materials of outbuildings are out of character and detrimental to their surroundings
- Future buildings may similarly be eyesores
- Buildings are very prominent in the AONB/National Park

South Downs Society do not object but ask that consideration be given to painting the chicken shed dark green to help it blend in more with the landscape and that hedging plants be planted that will provide adequate screening of the chicken shed and utility store. Until such time that any indigenous planting matures, suggest some fast growing plants could be planted to provide a temporary screen and then removed once indigenous plants mature.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

South East Plan (GOSE 2009): C2 (South Downs National Park), C3 (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993 – 2006 (ADC 1996): AC1, AC2, AC3
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM 2005)
PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' (ODPM 2004)

Planning Assessment

The South East Plan states that the designation of the South Downs National Park is a material consideration in the making of any planning decision that may significantly affect the Park (C2). Policy C3 refers to AONBs and states that high priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

Local Plan policy AC1 states that the countryside will be protected fro its own sake from development which does not need a countryside location. Development outside the built-up area boundary will not normally be granted unless it is for the essential needs of agriculture. Development should be of a particularly high standard of design and sited so as to minimise visual intrusion.

Policy AC2 states that only in compelling circumstances will development be permitted in the AONB. Any development that would be harmful to the visual quality and distinctive characteristics of the area will not be permitted. Policy AC3 states that development within the AONB should have particular regard to the characteristic sculptured landform and appearance of the AONB. New development should be sympathetic to traditional forms, materials and detailing of buildings and enclosures.

Government policy is set out in Planning Policy Statement PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development'. Relevant paragraphs are 17, which refers to the commitment to protecting and improving the environment; 18 which states that planning should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design; and 34 which states that good design is indivisible from good planning and that design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area, should not be accepted.

PPS7 states that nationally designated areas have the highest status of protection and the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in development control decisions.

Visual amenity and impact on character of National Park

The size of the area of land in question is large and does not constitute a minor incursion into the countryside. The original area of the rear garden of 2 New Cottages is approximately 11.5m by 26m (299sqm) and the extension of curtilage therefore constitutes a significant and disproportionate incursion. The land is to be used for domestic horticulture and will have the appearance of a tended allotment or vegetable garden rather than an agricultural field. The grass has been mown and the line of planting and fence accentuates the formal appearance of the land which is at odds with the established land form and character in this part of the National Park.

The site is visible from adjoining land and from Coombes Road and its visual impact is exacerbated by the three (four proposed) buildings on the site which add to the domestic character of the land. The buildings are not of good quality, comprising a former pre-fabricated concrete flat-roofed garage and two sheds, one of which (chicken shed) has a red/orange stain which does little to help it blend into the landscape. The proposed greenhouse is likely to add to the visual intrusion, with its reflective glass adding to the prominence of the building. While the number, size and appearance of buildings could be controlled or restricted by condition, it is considered that the use of the land, the formalization of its appearance with mown grass, formal planted beds and vegetable plots, formal hedge and tree planting and the potential for associated clutter would be harmful in the wider landscape.

It is considered that the change of use of the land for this purpose has a negative impact on the character and appearance of this high quality landscape which, if allowed, would set a dangerous precedent for further incursions which the Council would find difficult to resist. This is highlighted by the recent extension of curtilage at 1 New Cottages which, cumulatively with the current application, has a significant visual impact.

Residential amenity

The extension of the curtilage does not impact on residential amenity as the use of the land for horticulture is not likely to result in excessive noise or activity which is harmful to the neighbouring occupiers.

Recommendation

REFUSE for reason that:-

1. C4R (amended) The site lies within the South Downs National Park and the change of use of the land to domestic horticulture and the erection of domestic outbuildings conflicts with the policies of the South East Plan (C2, C3) and the Adur District Local Plan (AC1, AC2, AC3) which require that within this area there will be a strong presumption against development (including changes of use) such as that which has been carried out which would be intrusive and harmful to the visual quality and essential characteristics of the landscape.

2. B10R (amended) If this proposal were permitted, the local planning authority would find it difficult to resist similar proposals in the area, the cumulative effect of which would be to seriously harm the essential character and appearance of the National Park, contrary to policies C2 and C3 of the South East Plan and Policies AC1-3 of the Adur District Local Plan

Case Officer Peter Barnett Date 2 June 2010