Expiry Date - 10/06/2024

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0500/24 **Recommendation – APPROVE**

Site: **25 Belsize Road Worthing West Sussex**

Proposal: **Conversion from 2 flats back into single dwelling as originally built.**

Date of site visit: 10/05/24

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Site and Surroundings

The site is located to the west side of Belsize Road with a residential area of Worthing. The property comprises a two storey, semi-detached house with brick elevations, a two storey gabled bay to the front, sash windows and a slate tiled roof and outrigger to the rear. There is a single storey extension to the side and rear and a garage adjacent to the north side boundary set back towards the rear. The property is currently occupied as two x 2 bedroom flats, one at ground floor and one at first floor. The ground floor benefits from a parking area to the front, sufficient for several vehicles and a good size garden to the rear. The first floor flat has no external amenity space or parking.

The surrounding street scene consists mainly of attractive large semi-detached or detached houses of varying design and materials and of similar scale and form, set back from the road behind brick and flint walls. Many of these houses have been converted into flats and many remain as single dwelling family houses. The adjoining property (south) at No.23 is a single dwelling house and the property to the north at No.27 is occupied as flats. There is a reasonably equal mix of flats and houses on the road (18 buildings occupied as flats and 22 occupied as houses).

The property is not within a conservation area and is not a listed building. There is a protected Walnut tree within the rear garden on the boundary with No.23.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for conversion of two flats back into a single dwelling as originally built.

The ground floor flat has a GIA of approximately 90.75sqm and provides 2 bedrooms, a through lounge, kitchen, bathroom and garden room. The ground floor flat has sole access to the garden area to the rear and parking to the front providing a total of 285sqm of external space. There is an outbuilding/garage adjacent to the north boundary, also used exclusively by the ground floor flat.

The first floor flat has a GIA of approximately 85.5sqm and provides 2 bedrooms a lounge, bathroom and kitchen. There is no external space or parking associated with this flat.

Both flats are accessed via a single door to the front with separate internal access from the hallway.

The proposal would result in reinstatement of the property back in to a 4 bed family house providing 4 bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor and a lounge, dining room, breakfast/kitchen room, utility and garden room at ground floor.

The only internal changes would be removal of the separate doors to each flat and opening up the stairs into the hall.

The only external alteration proposed is the replacement of an east facing window to the utility room at the rear, with a door.

Relevant Planning History:

PREAPP/0043/24 - Conversion of 2 flats into one dwelling – Unlikely to be supported but maybe possible if sufficient information could be provided regarding the impact from the lack of sound insulation for both properties and the lack of amenities for the first floor flat. This would need to be considered as a formal application.

WB/702/59 - Alterations to convert existing semi-detached dwelling house into 2 flats – Approved

No.21 Belsize Road - AWDM/0937/16 - Convert flats (ground and first floor) back to one 4 no. bedroom dwelling – Approved

Consultations:

Planning Policy - This property currently provides 2 x 2 bed flats which could potentially be considered as smaller family size units. That said the first floor flat does not have access to any form of private amenity space or off road parking. In addition, further evidence submitted by the applicant as part of the application suggests that the overall standard of conversion which predates current standards (carried out in 1959) indicates that the standard of conversion works and sound insulation between the flats is likely to be poor. The evidence submitted has confirmed that there is no sound insulation and this is currently an amenity issue.

In terms of policy DM1 criteria e) vi) indicated the type of considerations that will be taken into account when determining an *application 'amenity considerations and evidence regarding the need for family homes'* but these are examples and are not an exhaustive list. It states clearly that each application will be considered on its merits. Para 5.17 of WLP refers to the need to retain existing homes especially larger family homes (3 + beds). It states that

there is a need to ensure a range of housing dwelling types and sizes 'to meet the identified housing needs, facilitate housing choice and achieve mixed and balanced communities'. Para 5.18 refers to situations where it may be justified to allow the loss of existing housing - such as raising the standard of poor quality accommodation. In terms of the mix of market housing recommended by the SHMA Para 5.7 indicates that between 10-20% should be 4 bed dwellings.

I think given the character of the location with both family homes and conversions, and if we are satisfied that there are issues around amenity and age and standard of conversion and that this proposal provides an opportunity to raise the standard and provide a high quality larger family home we could on balance provide a favourable response to this proposal.

Environmental Health - No comments

Private Sector Housing - No objections

WSCC Highways - This proposal is for the conversion from 2 flats back into single dwelling as originally built. The site is located on Belsize Road, an unclassified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 mph.

The LHA does not anticipate that the proposals would give rise to a material intensification of movements to or from the site. Existing access and parking arrangements will be unaffected by the proposals.

The applicant proposes two car parking spaces for this development on the driveway as per the existing arrangements. The WSCC Car Parking Demand Calculator indicates that a dwelling of this size in this location would require at least three car parking spaces. However, from inspection of WSCC mapping, there appears to be sufficient space on the existing driveway to provide an additional car parking space.

No details of cycle parking provision have been provided. Cycling is a viable option in the area and the LHA would request that secure cycle parking provision be provided in accordance with WSCC Parking Standards.

The LHA does not consider that this proposal 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 115), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

If the LPA are minded to approve the application, the following conditions and informative should be applied:

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.

WSP - The applicant is applying for the conversion from 2 flats back into single dwelling as originally built.

Following a review of the submitted information, we have no objection on surface water grounds. Due to the site, size, location, and type of development we would recommend the approval of the application.

Southern Water – Southern Water requires a formal application for any new connection to the public foul sewer to be made by the applicant or developer.

It is possible that a sewer now deemed to be public could be crossing the development site. Therefore, should any sewer be found during construction works, an investigation of the sewer will be required to ascertain its ownership before any further works commence on site.

Representations:

None received

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036 (WBC 2023): Policies:
SP1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
SS1 (Spatial Strategy)
DM1 (Housing Mix)
DM2 (Housing Density)
DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment)
DM15 (Sustainable Transport and Active Travel)
DM16 (Sustainable Design)
DM17 (Energy)
DM20 (Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage)
DM22 (Pollution)

National Planning Policy Framework (HCLG 2023)
National Planning Practice Guidance
Strategic Market Housing Assessment (2020)
Nationally Described Space Standards (March 2015)
SPD ‘Space Standards’ (WBC 2012)
SDP ‘A Guide to Residential Development’ (WBC 2013)
CIL Charging Schedule (Aug 2021)

Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

The Worthing Local Plan was adopted on 28th March 2023. Policy SS1 sets out the Housing supply over the period 2020-2036 and gives a total figure of 3672 (an annual target of 230 dwellings per annum).

Paragraph 74 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. The supply of deliverable sites should include a buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land, or 20% where there has been a significant under delivery over the previous three years.

The Inspectors report at Paragraph 176 states:

"I am satisfied that this is a reasonable assessment of likely deliverable supply. This comfortably exceeds the likely five-year housing land requirement. It is possible that some sites may stall or take longer to start delivering new housing, especially taking into account uncertainties surrounding the outcome of Brexit and COVID-19. However, there is sufficient headroom to be reasonably confident that a five-year supply of deliverable housing land would exist at adoption."

The Inspector was satisfied that the housing requirement represents a reasonable and realistic assessment of the limited capacity of the Borough.

The most recent housing trajectory and 5 year housing land supply for Worthing can be found in the Annual Monitoring Report 2022-2023. Table 9 indicates the Five Year Supply measured against the adopted WLP annual target of 230 dwellings plus a 20% buffer, which results in a 7 year supply of deliverable sites.

To maintain the supply of housing paragraph 79 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to monitor progress in building out sites with planning permission. Where the Housing Delivery test indicates delivery has fallen below 75% of the local planning authorities housing requirement over the previous three years, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies, in addition to the requirement for an Action plan and 20% buffer.

The latest Housing Delivery Test was published in December 2023 and Worthing Borough Council scored 33%. Therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies as the delivery of housing was less than 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.

The proposal would result in the net loss of a dwelling unit comprising a 2 bedroom flat.

WLP Policy DM1 (e) states that planning applications that result in the loss of residential accommodation will not be permitted unless one or more of a number of listed exceptions apply. One of the listed exceptions vi) states, *'applications for the conversion of flats … back to family sized homes will be considered on their merits taking account of other considerations including, for*

example, amenity considerations and evidence regarding the need for family homes'.

Paragraph 5.17 of the WLP refers to the need to retain existing homes especially larger family homes (3 + beds). It states that there is a need to ensure a range of housing dwelling types and sizes 'to meet the identified housing needs, facilitate housing choice and achieve mixed and balanced communities'.

The most recent SHMA was undertaken in 2020 and identifies a need for all different sizes of homes in the market and social housing sectors for Worthing. The need for 4-bedroom family housing is 10-20% and for 2-bedroom flats is 40-45%.

In terms of floor space the current provision of 2 x 2 bedroom flats, each in excess of 85sqm GIA comfortably exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards and could be considered to provide small family homes. However, the first floor flat has a lack of storage space, no external amenity space or off street parking, therefore undermining its potential as family accommodation.

The ground floor flat has parking, storage and external space and currently accommodates a small family (the applicants). Although the space provided by the current flat is good, the layout is less favourable to family living due to the only living space being a through lounge facilitating the only access to the kitchen and bathroom at the rear of the flat. The front bedroom is much more suited to a lounge with the large sash windows facing on to the street and the original fireplace however this would reduce the flat to one bedroom, as it would be even less desirable to use the current through lounge as a bedroom due to access.

The family that occupy the ground floor flat intend to purchase the first floor flat to enable its conversion back into a family home, the property being ideally located in terms of transport links and schools with a large garden and off street parking. Due to the layout of the ground floor flat it would not be possible for the applicants to stay with a growing family unless the building is converted. The first floor flat is currently vacant.

The building was converted in 1959 and the standard requirements for sound-proofing between flats vertically and between the ground floor flat and communal entrance hallway are not in place. The use of the room above this bedroom as a lounge, causes unacceptable noise issues for the ground floor flat as a result, with excess noise being an issue from both above (ceiling) and from the wall adjoining the communal hallway. Noise transference from the ground floor flat to the first floor flat has also been confirmed to be an issue.

Given the above amenity issues in relation to the lack of sound insulation between flats and the lack of storage space, external space and parking for the first floor flat, this proposal would provide an opportunity to raise the standard of accommodation and provide a high quality larger family home.

The site is within a sustainable location with good access to public transport and within walking distance of a range of local facilities including shops, schools and public open space.

The property was originally built and occupied as a single family dwelling and when considered on its own merits and in context with the amenity issues identified above, reverting back to a single unit would be consistent with the aims of Policy DM1 to provide a mix of housing, including larger family homes and with the exceptions listed in e) vi).

Visual Amenity

The only external change proposed by this application is the replacement of a window with a door to the east elevation of the existing single storey side and rear extension. This addition is screened from view by the main house and would not be visible in the street scene.

There would be no adverse impact on the character of the property or the visual amenities of the locality as a result of this application.

Residential Amenity – Future Occupiers

The proposed single dwelling would have a GIA of approximately 176.25sqm providing 4 bedrooms, consisting of 3 doubles and 1 single. The dwelling would far exceed the Government's minimum standard of 115sqm for a 4-bedroom, 7-person dwelling and would easily meet the storage requirements for this size of dwelling.

The rear garden is approximately 140sqm (excluding the external space to the side and front) and exceeds the minimum external space standard of 100sqm required for a large semi-detached house.

Additional external storage space is provided within the existing garage.

The proposed conversion of the property back into a family home would provide generous living accommodation, storage space and private external amenity space resulting in a high standard of accommodation for the occupants.

Residential Amenity – Neighbours

No external alterations are proposed to the property and there would be no changes to the external space or parking provision and there would be no detrimental impact on the residential amenities of adjacent occupiers.

Access and Highways

WSCC Highways have not raised any objection in principle to the conversion of the property back in to a single dwelling house. The proposal requires 3 parking spaces which could easily be accommodated on the existing driveway.

Secure cycle parking is required for the development and this can be secured by condition. The existing garage on site could accommodate this requirement to ensure that sustainable methods of transport are provided.

There are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Sustainable Development

The proposal involves the re-use of existing building stock which is inherently sustainable.

CIL

No additional floor area is created by the proposed development and therefore no CIL is payable.

Conclusion

The conversion of this property back to a single family dwelling would be consistent with the character of the street scene which consists of large semi-detached houses many of which have been converted to flats but more have been retained as single dwelling houses. The property is sustainably located within easy walking distance of schools and public transport. A very good standard of family housing would be provided for the future occupiers and the proposal would address the current amenity issues resulting from use as two flats.

On balance, the loss of a dwelling unit is considered acceptable when considered in context with the benefits of conversion in addressing amenity issues. It should be noted that approval of this application is only possible due to it falling within one of the exceptions set out under Policy DM1 e) vi) and in relation to the amenity issues identified and should not be considered to set a precedent for other applications resulting in the loss of a dwelling unit.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Cycle storage

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 - 10/06/2024

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

Case Officer:	Amanda Haslett	Date:	29/05/24
Authorised by:	Jo Morin	Date:	30.05.2024