Expiry Date – 21/4

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0314/20 Recommendation – Refuse

Site: Dovecote Cottage, Upper Brighton Road, Sompting

Proposal: Replacement of existing roof lights with 4no. pitched roof dormers to rear (East) roofslope (East Building)

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Date of Site Visit: 28.2.

Site and Surroundings

This application relates to a single storey 'F' shaped building on the south side of The Upper Brighton Road in Sompting Village. Formerly, agricultural outbuildings it was converted into a four bedroom dwelling following permission in 1996. It has a simple pitched roof form and very much retains the appearance of agricultural outbuildings.

The site sits behind a low wall and is visible from the road. To the west is a two storey dwelling converted as part of the same 1996 permission.

This dwelling was created out of former outbuildings belonging to Upton Farm House, a Grade II listed building. Upton Farm house lies north of the A27. It is not considered that the application site is within the curtilage of a listed building nor forms part of its setting. However, Sompting village lies outside of the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB), and is therefore within the countryside. It is also designated as a Conservation Area and lies within the Local Green Gap.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought to replace four east facing rooflights with four pitched roof dormers on the southern most part of this building. The rooflights light ground floor rooms. The proposal does not include a revised first floor plan and so it is assumed the dormers are sought to light the same rooms.

Relevant Planning History

ADC/0308/10 - Timber building required in connection with keeping sheep on the land (adjacent to south boundary of field). Granted 28.10.10

ADC/0546/08 - Conversion of workshop, store and 3 covered parking bays into ancillary habitable accommodation (retrospective). Granted, subject to legal agreement, 16.1.09

ADC/0286/08 - Conversion of workshop, store and 3 covered parking bays into habitable accommodation. Refused 18.8.08

ADC/0114/06 - Timber agricultural building re-sited adjacent to south boundary. Granted 17.7.06

S/35/05 - Retention of Timber Agricultural Building (With Screen Planting). Refused 13.7.05. Appeal Dismissed.

S/82/04 - Timber Agricultural Building (Retrospective). Refused 23.11.04

S/18/04 - Installation of 4 rooflights In east elevation & 4 in south elevation. Granted 5.5.04

S/41/00 - Conversion of building into a single-storey dwelling (including increased width of building & higher roof). Refused 17.7.00. Appeal Dismissed.

S/38/99 – Conversion of building into a single storey dwelling (including increased width of building and higher roof (amendment to previous permission. Refused 11.10.99.

S/15/99 - Conversion of building into a single storey dwelling (including increased width of building and higher roof (amendment to previous permission. Refused 1.6.99.

S/26/96 - Demolition of brick extension on West Elevation of cow stalls, demolition of walls adjacent to access & part demolition of west boundary wall (Conservation Area Consent). Granted 8.7.96

S/9/96 - Change of Use & associated alterations to convert farm buildings to 2 dwellings (incl. re-alignment of front boundary wall). Granted 17.6.96

Consultations

Adur District Conservation Area Group: No objection

Sompting Parish Council: No objection

Representations

None received.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework 2019
Adur Local Plan 2017 Policies 1, 2, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17
Sompting Conservation Area Appraisal

Planning Assessment

Principle

The principle of development is not supported as this site lies outside the Built Up Area Boundary within the countryside and local green gap. It is also within Sompting conservation area. For consideration is the impact of the proposed roof extensions on the appearance of this building in its countryside position and within the conservation area. Neighbour impacts should also be considered.

Vision 2 of the adopted Adur Local Plan states that '*Sompting village will have retained its rural village character.'* Vision 7 sets out to protect '*Adur's character and local distinctiveness (urban and rural, coastal and countryside) will have been maintained and enhanced through protection and enhancement of its landscape, townscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity.'*
Policy 1 of the Adur Local Plan supports Sustainable Development to '*secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.'*
Policy 2 states that *'Development within the Built Up Area Boundaries (defined on the Policies Map) of Lancing, Sompting, Shoreham-by-Sea, Southwick and Fishersgate will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the development plan. Development which would result in the coalescence or loss of identity of settlements will be resisted. The character of Sompting village, which lies outside of the Built Up Area Boundary, will be respected and maintained.'*

Policy 10 - *Sompting village will not be expanded or intensified due to its linear and historic character, and countryside location within the Local Green Gap.*

Policy 13: Adur's Countryside and Coast
Outside of the Built Up Area Boundary (as shown on the Policies Map), development will only be permitted where the need for a countryside location is essential; it is for quiet informal recreation or the essential needs of agriculture or horticulture, flood management, or is otherwise consistent with this Local Plan (or subsequent DPDs). The extension of isolated groups of buildings or the consolidation of linear or sporadic development will not be permitted. Any development in the countryside should not result in a level of activity which has an adverse impact on the character of the area.

The landscape character of Adur and other areas of countryside, the coast, river, and settlement pattern will be protected and where possible enhanced. Any development or activities within the countryside must respect and where appropriate reinforce the setting, distinctiveness and sense of place of the above areas, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness such as geology and landform, biodiversity, scenic quality, strategic views, tree cover, settlement patterns, heritage and local vernacular, and land use.

In the case of residential buildings, any extensions should be subservient to the existing building.

Policy 14: Local Green Gaps

Local Green Gaps between the settlements of Lancing/ Sompting – Worthing, and Lancing-Shoreham-by-Sea, (as shown on the Policies Map), will be protected in order to retain the separate identities and avoid coalescence of these settlements. Within these areas any development permitted must be consistent with other policies of this plan, and must not (individually or cumulatively) lead to the coalescence of settlements.

Policy 15: Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm

Development should be of a high architectural quality and respect and enhance the character of the site, and the prevailing character of the area, in terms of proportion, form, context, massing, siting, layout, density, height, size, scale, materials, detailed design features and landscaping. Development should:

- *Enhance the local environment by way of its appearance and character, with particular attention being paid to the architectural form, height, materials, density, scale, orientation, landscaping and layout of the development;*
- *Make a positive contribution to the sense of place, local character and distinctiveness of an area; and not have an unacceptable impact on adjacent properties*
- *Respect the existing natural features of the site, including land form, trees and biodiversity and contribute positively to biodiversity;*

Policy 16: A Strategic Approach to the Historic Environment

The Council will conserve and enhance the historic environment and character of Adur, which includes historic buildings, features, archaeological assets and their settings. Where development affecting any heritage asset is permitted, it must be of a high quality, respecting its context and demonstrating a strong sense of place.

Policy 17: The Historic Environment

Conservation Areas: Development in Conservation Areas will be required to be of a high standard of design and materials so as to respect, preserve and enhance the character and appearance of that area.

Conservation Area Character Appraisals will be used to assess applications within designated Conservation Areas and opportunities will be taken through new development and other measures to preserve and enhance these areas. The importance to the local area of key non-listed buildings within Conservation Areas will be a material consideration in assessing an application for their demolition or development.

Sompting Conservation Area Appraisal.

New shape, development should respect the existing village structure in scale and materials and in this connection careful consideration will be given to the design of each proposal. A quality of imaginative design is necessary and in general the following guidelines are given: SCALE: The old village is generally small scale with a predominance of pitched roofs. New buildings should reflect this character and windows should generally occupy a small proportion of the wall. The skyline of new developments will be carefully assessed

The Council will closely examine all proposals to alter or to demolish any buildings within the Conservation Area, particularly those in respect of listed buildings and those identified in this report as being of Townscape Value.

Assessment

Countryside

These outbuildings were carefully converted into a dwelling following permission in 1996. Following this approval the applicant attempted to obtain permission for a conversion which included an increase in width and height of the building. This application was refused and subsequently dismissed on appeal, application S/41/00 refers. See appeal decision APP/Y3805/A/00/1048038 at Appendix A.

The Inspector concluded that had the original 1996 approved scheme included widening and an increase in height it was unlikely that planning permission would have been granted. He considered to do so would be contrary to strategic gap policy at the time in that it would amount to 'new development'.

It is considered that to extend the building as now proposed would result in similar harm. The existing conversion is very sympathetic to the original buildings uses and setting. The roofline is unaltered other than the subsequent addition of the rooflights to be replaced. The simple conversion respects the buildings position within the countryside and green gap.

The proposed dormers are large, numerous and visible from the street. They would not respect the character of these former outbuildings or their countryside setting. They would not reinforce the setting or sense of place. Nor would they be subservient to the existing building, as the rooflights are. They would not make a positive contribution to the sense of place, local character and distinctiveness of this part of Sompting village. In failing to respect the separate identity of this part of the countryside it undermines the principle of avoiding the coalescence of these settlements.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to policies 2, 10, 13, 14 and 15 of the Local Plan.

Conservation Area

The proposed dormers are large and numerous. Each one takes up nearly the full height of the roof. They would spoil the simple clean roof lines of a sympathetically converted outbuilding. They would not preserve or enhance the character of the building itself or Sompting conservation area. Consequently the proposal is considered to be contrary to policies 16 and 17 of the Local Plan and the Sompting Conservation Area Appraisal.

Neighbour Impact

No neighbour will be directly affected by this proposal.

Recommendation REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The site lies outside the Built up Area Boundary, within the countryside and a Local Green Gap and it is considered that the proposed dormers, in terms of their position, number and scale, would not respect or reinforce the setting or sense of place of this converted dwelling or its countryside setting. They would be harmful to local character and the distinctiveness of this part of Sompting village contrary to policies 2, 10, 13, 14 and 15 of the Adur Local Plan 2017, Sompting Conservation Area Appraisal and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The proposed dormers due to their position, number, form and scale would be harmful to the character of this building and would not preserve or enhance the character of Sompting conservation area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies 15, 16 and 17 of the Adur Local Plan 2017 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informative

1. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and determining the application within a timely manner, clearly setting out the reason(s) for refusal, allowing the Applicant the opportunity to consider the harm caused and whether or not it can be remedied by a revision to the proposal. The Local Planning Authority is willing to meet with the Applicant to discuss the best course of action and is also willing to provide pre-application advice in respect of any future application for a revised development.

Is recommendation contrary to any representations? Yes.

Case Officer signed:	MOK	Date: 14.4.2020
Authorised and signed by:	Peter Barnett	Date: 14 April 2020

APPENDIX A

Appeal decision APP/Y3805/A/00/1048038 dated 5.12.2000

Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 14 November 2000

The Planning Inspectorate
Room 1404
Tollgate House
Houlton Street
Bristol BS2 9DJ
☎ 0117 987 8927

by David Nicholson BA BArch PGDipBldgCons IHBC RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions

Date - 5 DEC 2000

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3805/A/00/1048038
Upton Farm Buildings, Upper Brighton Road, Sompting.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs F Maio against the decision of Adur District Council.
- The application (ref: S/41/00/TP) dated 19 May 2000, was refused by notice dated 17 July 2000.
- The development proposed is the conversion of an existing structure (single storey farm buildings) into a residential dwelling, including a 1200mm addition to the widths of the buildings.

Summary of Decision: The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

1. Full planning permission (Document 5) was granted in June 1996 for the change of use of the appeal site, and associated alterations, to convert the farm buildings to 2 dwellings.

2. The appellants purchased the site shortly after this permission was granted. The converted dovecote to the west of the site has been converted, the block of single storey farm buildings have not.

3. The appeal site and its buildings were once part of the farmyard to Upton Farm House, which is a Grade II listed building, and probably once formed part of the setting to this house. However, given the change of use of the farm buildings, the double width road and the two metre high wall separating the house from the site, in my view the appeal site is no longer within the setting of the listed building.

4. The site lies within the boundaries of the Sompting Conservation Area and the Strategic Gap on the Adur District Local Plan Proposals Map 1996.

Main Issues

5. I consider that the main issues in this case are the effects of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area with particular reference to:

   (a) the Strategic Gap

   (b) Sompting Conservation Area.

Planning Policy

6. The Development Plan includes the West Sussex Structure Plan, 1993 and the Adur District Local Plan, April 1996. At the Hearing the Council advised me that the policies of particular relevance are Structure Plan Policy C8 and Local Plan Policy AC9. I also noted that Policies C1 to C5 of the Structure Plan refer to the countryside in general and the

presumption against development in Strategic Gaps, including Worthing and Sompting/Lancing. Policy C8 makes an exception to these Policies for small existing buildings providing, amongst other things, that they are of permanent construction and do not include extensions. This Policy also advises that proposals for the conversion of farm buildings to dwellings will be subject to particular scrutiny as to whether they would materially alter the appearance and setting of the buildings.

7. Local Plan Policy AC9 includes permitting the change of use of former agricultural buildings in the countryside: where they are structurally sound, would not involve the erection of substantial extensions or substantial demolition and rebuilding, and would conserve the character, fabric and setting of the buildings. Local Plan Policy AB4 requires new development (including extensions and alterations) within conservation areas to be of a high standard of design and construction materials such as to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the particular Conservation Area.

8. Planning Policy Guidance Note 7: The Countryside—Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (PPG7), includes advice that existing rural buildings considered for re-use should be of permanent and substantial construction, and capable of conversion without major reconstruction. Also that it may be appropriate to apply control similar to that over new housing if the existing building is unsuitable for conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension.

9. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15) refers to the duty, under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Reasons

10. Sompting Conservation Area surrounds part of the old village of Sompting within a small area of countryside between the conurbations of Worthing and Lancing that has been designated as a Strategic Gap in the Local Plan. The Conservation Area is split in two with the A27 separating the northern half of the old village, with its Saxon church, from the southern half, which is built up on either side of the old Upper Brighton Road. At the west end, the Upper Brighton Road separates Upton Farm House to the north from its former farm buildings to the south, and these now comprise the appeal site. The buildings probably date from the early 19thC and take the form of two separate structures; a former dovecote and a former cowstalls/cart shed building. While the dovecote has been fully repaired as part of the conversion, the latter has not.

11. The cowstalls/cart shed structure consists of connected single-storey enclosures which, on plan, take the shape of the letter 'F'. At the Hearing I was shown videotape evidence of the condition of this building at the time it was purchased, shortly after planning permission was granted. My attention was also drawn to the Structural Survey Report (Document 4, Appendix 2b) which, I was told, was considered by the Council before granting permission in 1996.

12. The proposal is to convert the cowstalls/cart shed into a residential dwelling in line with the existing permission, but to take down approximately half the remaining walls and rebuild them 1200m further out, with the roof following the configuration in the existing permission, but proportionally wider and higher.

Strategic Gap

13. The Council has referred me to their Policies and to advice in PPG7, which are both very detailed and specific on the parameters for the conversion of agricultural buildings. It expressed concern that, if allowed, the proposal might set a precedent for other developments within the gap which might then be hard to resist and, cumulatively, would harm the gap and lose the separate identity of adjacent settlements. The Council conceded that, in itself, the proposal would do little if any harm to the gap beyond that already allowed by the former permission, but argued that in this case the breach of Policy would be serious. It claimed that the proposal would also significantly lessen the extent that the building would be preserved, and that this loss of historic fabric, together with the proposed extensions, would mean that the exception under Policy C8 would no longer apply.

14. The appellants have pointed to recommendations in the structural report that the roofs be replaced and that some work be done to the walls. They tell me that subsequent advice has identified additional concerns with the walls and that some further rebuilding will be necessary. They argue that there would be no harm in rebuilding these walls further out, but rather that the end result would be a better building.

15. To my mind the relevant structure is that which the Council understood would be retained from the structural report, which I was told accompanied the application in 1996. I have noted that parts of the roof are no longer in place and that vegetation has been cleared, and accept the Council's advice that, without prompt repairs, both these factors will shortly contribute to hastening the decline of the walls, especially over the winter months. However, from the evidence in the structural report, from the video recording and my own observations on site I do not consider that much of the relevant fabric has yet been lost. I have noted that there may be a conflict between different engineers' advice, but in my experience this is not unusual, and see no reason why, with the appropriate advice from an engineer with conservation experience, the vast majority of the existing walls could not be retained or why, at the moment, the existing permission for conversion could not be implemented.

16. The current proposals, however, would involve the rebuilding of approximately 50% of the remaining structure. I have noted that the Local Plan, including Policy AC9, was adopted in April 1996, before the previous permission was granted in June 1996. In my opinion the current proposal, involving substantial demolition and rebuilding, does not comply with this Policy and consider it unlikely that the current proposal would have been granted permission in June 1996. I therefore conclude on this issue that neither the exception in Structure Plan Policy C8 nor the criteria in Local Plan Policy AC9 would be met, and that the proposal would amount to new development in the Strategic Gap contrary to Development Plan Policies and advice in PPG7.

Sompting Conservation Area

17. At the Hearing I was told by the Council that the existing structure, although dilapidated, lends character to the conservation area through its flint walls, historic building styles and the scale of the spaces it encloses, harking back as it does to earlier, more intensive, methods of agriculture. The Council wishes to preserve this character as far as possible and, in my view, in granting the previous permission, has accepted that a change in the use of the building may be the best way to achieve this. To my mind, however, this does not imply that the change of use to a dwelling would do no harm to the rural character, but rather that less harm would be done by preserving parts of the building through a conversion, than by

losing the building altogether. In my opinion therefore, while the walls still stand, there are sound grounds for granting permission for conversion today, as the Council did in 1996.

18. The current proposal, however, is not only to change the use of the building, but to rebuild approximately half the walls as well as the entire roof. To my mind this would shift the balance of harm such that the amount of fabric, character and appearance that would be preserved would be so limited that it would no longer outweigh the harm done by the change of use and the rebuilding.

19. The appellants have claimed that a skilled craftsman would do the rebuilding to exactly match the existing walls. From my site visit I saw that these walls are constructed from flints, laid to courses with a constant diagonal alignment, and bedded in a rough aggregate grit. From my knowledge of traditional building methods I consider that the original flintwork would have been carried out by a tradesman who had devoted most of his working life to this particular trade and would have been apprenticed over a long period of time by a similarly trained craftsman. He would have been supported by colleagues supplying well-beaten lime mortar and carefully sorted flints. In my experience, even with the most skilled and well-meaning of contemporary craftsmen, this level of specific workmanship acquired over generations no longer exists. I therefore conclude that the rebuilding would not exactly match and that a significant amount of the character of the buildings would be lost.

20. The appellants' have tried to justify the proposed rebuilding by concern that the walls may not have deep footings. I would agree that this is likely, but am also aware that they are over 150 years old and, as set out in the structural report, any settlement has almost certainly stabilised over this time. In my experience an appropriately experienced conservation engineer could therefore produce a scheme that would not require substantial rebuilding or underpinning. The report also refers to the relatively low loads that would be imposed on the existing walls by replacing the roof. However, if the width of the building were extended as proposed, the size and weight of the roof would increase, imposing additional loads on the walls, so threatening the foundations that might otherwise be adequate.

21. Finally, the appellants have referred to wanting to produce a high-quality job. To my mind though this is an ambiguous phrase, and an approach that strives for the best in the context of today's methods of construction may not be the same as one which seeks the sensitive preservation of as much as possible of the historic fabric and character. For all the above reasons I conclude that the proposed development would fail to conserve the character, fabric and setting of the buildings, and would harm rather than preserve or enhance the character or appearance of these buildings in the Sompting Conservation Area. It would therefore be contrary to Local Plan Policies AC9 and AB4, and to advice in PPG15.

Other Matters

22. The appellants have argued that additional space is needed to accommodate the various corridors necessary in the planned layout of the building. However, I note that the plan has not changed significantly since the speculative layout submitted for permission in 1996 and am not convinced that this problem could not be overcome by a more efficient and imaginative layout.

23. It was claimed that this was a rare example. However in my experience there are very many derelict farm buildings seen as having the potential for conversion and I consider the reason for such detailed advice in PPG7 and such specific policies in the Development Plan is to take account of these circumstances.

Conclusions

24. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Formal Decision

25. In exercise of the powers transferred to me, I dismiss the appeal.

Information

26. Particulars of the right of appeal against this decision to the High Court are enclosed for those concerned.

David Nicholson.

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Mr and Mrs F Maio	Dovecote Cottage Upper Brighton Road Worthing West Sussex BH14 9JU
Mr G F Dixon FASI	Bay Tree Cottage Park Drive Ferring West Sussex BH12 5DX

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

MS J Morin BA(Hons) DipURP MRTPI	Principal Planning Officer Adur District Council
Mr M V Rowan MSc BSc(Hons) Dip Arch Dip Cons(Rome) RIBA IHBC	Architectural Advisor to Adur District Council from West Sussex County Council

DOCUMENTS

Document	1	List of persons present at the Hearing
Document	2	Letter of Notification of the Hearing
Document	3	Letter of Representation
Document	4	Appendices to Council's Statement
Document	5	Planning Permission Ref: S/9/96/TP dated 17 June 1996
Document	6	Sale Particulars for Upton Farm Buildings – Strutt & Parker

PLANS

Plan	A	1642/2 1:1250
Plan	B	1642/1 1:500
Plan	C	1665/1A 1:100
Plan	D	1665/2A 1:50
Plan	E	Adur District Council Local Plan Proposals Map

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos	A	1996 photos
Photos	B	Generally 1997 photos

VIDEOS

Video	A	Video of buildings, 1996