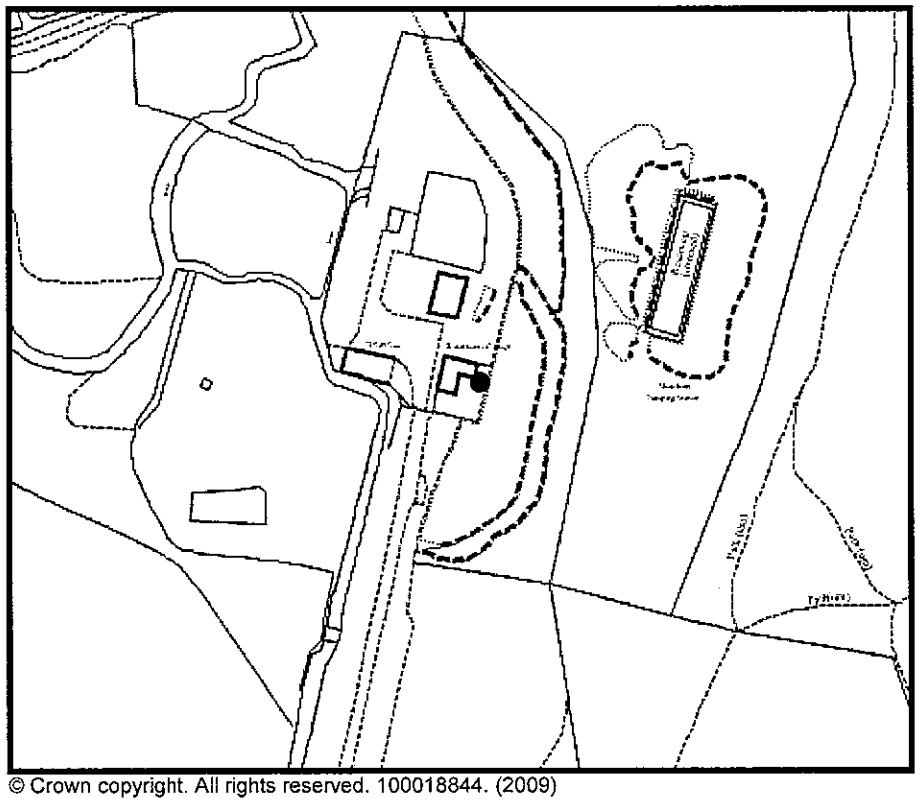
Application Number: ADC/0246/09 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: **Riverside Cottage, Steyning Road Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5FH**

Proposal: **Two-storey extension (revised resubmission of ADC/0477/08)**



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The Application

Riverside Cottage (formerly Waterworks Cottage) is an L-shaped detached cottage, beside the Southern Water's treatment works, in an isolated position at the foot of Mill Hill, on the east edge of the valley floor. It lies to the north east of the A27 Adur fly-over and intersection. It is accessed via a long private road via a secure gated access off the A283 Steyning Road. There is a very steep tree-covered slope immediately behind the property. It has no garden as such. It is finished in a mixture of flint and render with a tiled roof.

This is a revised application to construct a two-storey extension at the rear (east) of the cottage, measuring 12.5m long and 4.5m wide (as compared to 5.6m wide as previously proposed under ADC/0477/08). The previously proposed single garage, 7.6m by 3.3m, attached to the north side, has now been deleted. As before, the extension would provide a sittingroom, study and utility room on the ground floor and 3 additional bedrooms on the first floor (amounting to 5 bedrooms in total). The external design has been changed to much more closely reflect the original cottage with flint-faced walls (except on the east wall), brick quoins and matching windows.

The previous application followed the refusal of an earlier application in May 2008 for a similar proposal but which included a further 2 bedrooms in the roof space (ADC/0177/08). The application was refused on the following ground:-

> *"The proposed extension, by reason of its large size and unsympathetic design, would be out of keeping in scale and appearance with the existing building and would detract to an unacceptable extent from the visual amenities of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and thereby conflict with the policies of the West Sussex Structure Plan (CH2, DEV1) and the Adur District Local Plan (AC2, AH7)"*

Consultations and Representations

South Downs Joint Committee: The planning officer reiterates his previous objection on grounds that, notwithstanding the deletion of the garage, the extension approximately doubles the floorspace the cottage and would completely change its character from a modest cottage to a substantial house.

Third Parties: No comments received.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AC1, AC2-3, AH7 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising Development Control Standard No.3 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings'
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM 2005)
PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'

Planning Assessment

Policies

The site is within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within the area to become the South Downs National Park.

Policy AC10 of the Adur District Local Plan, relating to existing dwellings in the countryside (which stated that extensions should respect the existing scale and character of the dwelling), has not been 'saved'.

Policy AG1 states that outside the built-up area boundary development will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Policy AC2, relating specifically to the AONB, states that only in compelling circumstances will development be permitted in the part of the AONB within Adur, and that any development that would be harmful to the visual quality and distinctive characteristics of the AONB will not be permitted. Where circumstances are regarded as compelling, development needs to be of a particularly high standard of design, must be in keeping with the character of the locality and sited so as to minimise visual intrusion and noise disturbance. AC3 requires development to have regard, among other things, to the AONB's characteristic sculptured landform and appearance.

Policy AH7 of the Local Plan states that extensions and alterations should, amongst other things, be of sympathetic design and materials to the original dwelling and the area in general. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on residential extensions states that "the most important basic principle is that any extension should be in keeping

with the appearance, scale, design and character of both the existing dwelling and street scene generally."

PPS7 makes no specific mention of extensions to existing dwellings but it does state that new building development in the countryside should be strictly controlled - "the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all." In national parks and AONBs, the conservation of outstanding natural beauty of the landscape should be given great weight in development control decisions.

Effect on character and appearance of the AONB

The existing cottage is very small, with a footprint area of only 60sqm, whereas the extension now proposed has a footprint area of 56sqm. Owing to the thickness of the walls of the cottage, the gross internal floor area would be increased from 91sqm to 187sqm. The scale of the extension doubles the size of the dwelling changing it from a small L-shaped two-bedroom cottage into a five-bedroom house. The proposed extension is clearly not subservient in scale to the original dwelling.

However, the latest proposal is much more sympathetic in terms of its architectural design and much greater care has been taken to match up the gable widths, roof pitches, external wall materials and windows. The width of the extension is slimmed down and the attached garage previously proposed deleted. The extension leaves the original structure of the cottage intact, adding a separate wing at the rear. The result is to create a dwelling of relatively pleasing appearance, albeit of significantly larger size.

The cottage is in an isolated position well away from the public highways, situated among trees at the very eastern edge of the valley floor. It can only be glimpsed from the A27 east of the flyover (300m south) and from the A283 (400m west). It can be seen from paths on the side slope of Mill Hill, mainly lower down the hill slope where the hill projects westwards (over 400m north). Its visual impact in the landscape is not therefore currently significant.

Despite the size of the proposed extension, owing to its location to the east of the cottage, in the narrow gap between the cottage and the extremely steep hillside covered in bushes and trees, its visual impact on the landscape would be much less than might be expected. From the A27 (south), it would be only the narrow gable end (4.5m wide) that could be glimpsed. From the A283 (west), it would only be the protrusion beyond the north side (3.3m). From paths on the side of Mill Hill (north), it would only be the narrow north gable end. The main bulk of the extension is on the east side but it could not be seen from that direction because of the near vertical bank at the foot of the steep wooded hillside directly abutting it.

If permission is granted, because of the location in the AONB, it is considered that there is a case for imposing a condition removing 'permitted development rights' that might enable any further extensions or detached buildings to be erected without obtaining specific planning permission.

With regard to whether there are compelling circumstances, the applicant states that he has a particular need as the existing cottage, with its very small room sizes and only two bedrooms, is incapable of accommodating his family in acceptable modern living

conditions, as they need to accommodate his disabled 84 year old father. They have had to store furniture in a temporary store. They also state that their 4 children who have young families of their own like to stay.

In conclusion, it is considered that the extension is sited to minimise its visual impact and that, with the deletion of the garage and revisions to the design to make it in keeping with the original construction of the cottage, it would not cause significant harm to the appearance of the AONB landscape. Taking account of the lack of any specific policies limiting the size of extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside and the applicant's need for the additional accommodation, on balance, it is considered that there is no longer sufficient justification for refusal.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason that:-

The proposed extension is designed and sited so as not to detract from the appearance of the cottage or the landscape of the Sussex Downs AONB. Having regard to the need for additional accommodation, it does not conflict materially with the policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AC1, AC2-3, AH7) or with PPS7.

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C12Eii (External walls and roof to match) (amended)
3. C18B (Removal of 'permitted development rights' for any further extensions or curtilage buildings without obtaining specific planning permission) (amended)

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Local Government Act 1972
Background Papers:

As referred to in individual application reports

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