Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1498/13 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: 279 Albion Street Southwick Brighton West Sussex

Proposal: Conversion of ground floor three bedroom flat to a one bedroom flat and a studio flat

Date of site visit: 29.04.2014

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application property comprises a ground-floor 3-bedroom flat within a detached 2-storey building located on the north side of Albion Street opposite the canal (Shoreham Harbour) and adjacent to the entrance to a private, unmade road serving a terrace of cottages set back from the main road frontage. Records show the original dwelling was converted into 2 flats in 1930. Planning permission was granted in Feb 2013 (AWDM/1082/12) for the sub-division of the first-floor flat (281 Albion Street) into a 1-bedroom unit and studio flat. This permission is currently being implemented.

The building, brick-built in Flemish bond has an attractive character with detailing matching that on the terrace of cottages to the rear, including unusual 'gothic' arched window heads on the ground-floor, and distinctive masonry quoins and door heads. It has been enlarged at the rear by an unsympathetic 2-storey, flat-roofed extension having a rendered finish. The original windows have been replaced in uPVC. Two outdoor areas at the rear are enclosed by fencing.

Permission is sought to convert the existing ground-floor flat into a studio flat and a 1-bedroom flat. The proposals involve blocking up an existing door in the west elevation which opens into the rear yard and creating a new door positioned slightly further to the north in the same elevation. The latter would become the main entrance to the proposed studio flat. The proposed 1-bedroom flat would be accessed from the existing entrance on the east elevation (shared with the first-floor flats approved under AWDM/1082/12)).

[The site was previously included within the outer zone of the HSE Consultation Zone for Shoreham Port Authority HSE Ref: H4271 but the zones were redrawn in Sept 2013 H4271 REV1 and the site now falls outside the relevant area.]

Consultations:

West Sussex County Council: The Highway Authority raises no objection commenting that whilst there is likely to be an increase in movements relating

to the proposal there will not be a material or detrimental impact to highway users. The most recently verified accident records reveal there have been non personal injury accidents in relation to the existing point of access onto Albion Street indicating a low risk of highway safety issues with the proposal. A condition to secure cycle storage is recommended.

Adur and Worthing Councils: The Environmental Health Officer has no adverse comments with regard to the proposed layout.

Representations: None received**.**

Relevant Planning Policies

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AH9 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising: Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions'
National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012)

Planning Assessment

Principle

There are no particular Local Plan policies relating to the sub-division of flats, but saved policy AH9 supports the conversion of dwelling houses into smaller self-contained units subject to an acceptable standard of accommodation being provided, there being no adverse amenity impacts on neighbouring properties and the provision of satisfactory parking and access arrangements. It states that the conversion of small family houses will not be permitted.

Although the existing first-floor flat has 3 bedrooms, it does not make an attractive family unit with only limited amenity space and no off-street parking provision. The applicant's agent states within the submitted Design & Access Statement that the existing 3-bedroom unit is difficult to let to families and the last few tenants have been couples or a couple with a small child.

Visual amenity

There would be no alteration to the main frontage elevations of the property (south and east) which retain much of their original attractive character. The proposed alterations involving the blocking up of an existing door and formation of new entrance to serve the ground-floor rear flat would only be apparent from within the existing yard and would not be visible from any public viewpoint.

[The drawings show the existing external steps leading from the yard to the rear first-floor flat would be removed. This is at variance to the drawings approved under AWDM/1082/12 which showed the external stairs retained as an alternative means of access to the rear first-floor studio flat. Bearing in mind the ground and first-floor of this building are within the same ownership it is suggested the applicant be advised to make an application for a minor material amendment under S.73 to regularise the changes from the approved scheme.]

Residential amenity – effect on the amenities of future occupiers

The submitted floor plans show the bedsit flat would have an internal floor area of 34.5sqm which exceeds the minimum size requirements of 30sqm for bedsitting flats in the Council's SPG Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions'. The access to this unit is via the rear yard. The yard itself is accessed from the private road and scope for natural surveillance exists by virtue of the set back position of the adjacent terrace to the north with windows overlooking. Thus whilst the means of access to this unit is not ideal, it is not considered to be unsafe.

The main aspect from the bedsitting room would be to the east facing onto a small garden currently enclosed by fencing approximately 1.8m high. This rather restricted outlook could be improved by removing the fencing but this would open up the windows to view from passing vehicular and pedestrian traffic serving the rear terrace 295-309 Albion Street. The option of removing the fencing would be open to a future occupier of this unit, but it is considered should not be a requirement of permission since for the majority of occupiers the benefits of greater privacy plus a secure, private amenity area will likely outweigh the opportunity for an unrestricted view.

The proposed 1-bedroom flat would have an internal floor area of 50sqm which exceeds the Council's minimum size standard of 45sqm for a 1-bedroom flat. The proposed living room (19sqm) and bedroom (11sqm) are shown as being of a reasonable size and regular in shape with a south-facing outlook to the front of the property. The rear yard would be sub-divided providing the occupier of this unit with a very small private area just about sufficient to store a cycle (but little else).

The EHO (Housing) is satisfied of the internal layout of both flats.

[The scheme approved under AWDM/1082/12 identified the side garden as being available as amenity space for the occupiers of the proposed first-floor units which is at odds to the current proposal. However, the officer report at the time commented on the fact the resulting amenity area for the first-floor flats would not be private since it is overlooked at close quarters by windows in the ground-floor. The current proposal makes a more practical use of this space for the proposed ground-floor rear unit, but the applicant should be advised of the need to make an application for a minor material amendment under S.73 to regularise the change from the approved scheme.]

Residential amenity – effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers

Other than the new door described above, no other new openings are proposed.

The 'stacking' arrangement is not ideal since a first-floor bedroom within No.281 would be located above the ground-floor living area of the 1-bedroom flat. However, sound insulation is dealt with and 'tested' under the Building Regulations and there would be nothing to prevent the future occupiers of any flat from using the bedroom as a living room or visa versa.

There would be no adverse impact on the amenities of the adjoining dwelling semi-detached house to the west, No.277, or the nearest end of terrace house to the north, No.295.

Accessibility and parking

There is no parking provision within the curtilage of the building (279-281 Albion Street) although it appears likely vehicles park informally on the private access road).

The site is within reasonable walking distance of shops and facilities in Southwick district centre, and is accessibly located in relation to Southwick rail station and bus routes along Albion Street. No objection has been raised by the Highway Authority subject to the provision of cycle store. This is shown within the sub-divided rear yard.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason:-

The proposed development would help meet a need for additional housing and would not detract from the existing local urban environment. It can take place without resulting in unacceptable detriment to the amenities of neighbouring properties and without detraction from highway safety. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AH9) and the NPPF.

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Standard time limit
2. Approved plans
3. Cycle storage to serve the ground-floor flats to be carried out in accordance with the approved drawing.
4. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plan the refuse bins for the ground-floor flats hereby permitted shall be stored – other than on collection day – within the respective private amenity areas.

Informative

1. The applicant is advised that the development the subject of this permission will involve changes to the layout of the scheme approved under AWDM1082/12 relating to 281 Albion Street which will need to be addressed through the submission of an application to vary the approved drawings listed under condition 4 of AWDM/1082/12 (a Minor Material Amendment).
2. 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.

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

Case Officer: Jo Morin Date: 8 May 2014

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 9 May 2014