Expiry Date -

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: **Recommendation – APPROVE**
AWDM/0369/13

Site: **1 Downside Close Shoreham**

Proposal: **Retrospective installation of solar panel**

Neighbours checked: Y
Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings
Retrospective planning permission is sought for solar panel apparatus to the south facing roof slope of No. 1 Downside Close, a bungalow with recently constructed upper floor accommodation served by front and rear dormers.

The application site lies in a residential area of Shoreham within a small cul-de-sac characterised by bungalows (many with dormers)

Relevant Planning History
None

Consultations
None

Representations
Objection received from occupiers of No. 176 Downside, summarised:-
Significantly affected character of property and adversely impacted visual amenity of area. Backs onto Downside, a road frequented by walkers using it to access Buckingham Park. Given property set at a lower level than Downside has affect of making solar panel at eye level and appears obtrusive and adversely impacted character of street. Installed significantly above ridge line of property and not installed at discreet angle which adds to harm. Design of panel not sympathetic to existing property and materials are distinct from finishes of existing house. Many properties have flat roof dormers none of which installed apparatus that has impacted general amenity of area. Supportive of use of renewable energies and would not object to more sympathetically designed and unobtrusive panel at this property.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1 and AH7
DCLG PPS22 companion guide (2004)

Planning Assessment

Principle

As there is no relevant Saved Adur Local Plan policy, The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the updated expression of the Government's approach to micro-renewable energy.

Para.65 warns planning authorities not to refuse permission for infrastructure which promotes high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design. Para.98 then instructs planning authorities to:

● not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable and recognise even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

● **approve the application** if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

Visual amenity

The solar collecting tubes are an uncharacteristic feature but not as inharmonious as to be alien. Their modern reflective glass and metal appearance contrasts with the texture of the main building's tile roof, but their functional appearance is a clear indication that they serve a different purpose to other more decorative exterior materials on the main building. The architectural integrity of the original building has already been substantially changed very recently through the construction of a hip-to-gable roof extension alongside large front and rear dormers. There is also little option in the choice of materials, for the simple fact that these reflect the products available on the open market. These would still be the materials used, even if the tubing was positioned elsewhere on the building.

So the issue in visual terms turns on the fact that the solar collector apparatus projects above the roof surface. Although not flush, the mounting of the apparatus atop the roof facing south reflects maximisation of the product's effectiveness. The host dwelling stands neither in an elevated and prominent position compared with other neighbouring buildings. In terms of its size and alignment on the flat roof of the rear dormer, the solar panel adds little visual clutter to the overall expanse of roof form or surrounding roofscape of the wider area. It is sufficiently concealed from public view from the front of the building, looking north. The solar collector in question is visible from Downside looking south, but not so highly visible as to be overtly prominent. It protrudes only marginally over the building's roof ridge roughly level with the building's chimney height. As such, this single piece of equipment has added little to the potential proliferation of visual clutter on roofscapes in the street scene.

Its visual impact therefore is not so harmful as to render its presence detrimentally harmful to the architectural design of the building. The environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy development are an important consideration, irrespective of the scale of such provision. The potential

to reduce carbon emissions through reducing the need to burn fossil fuels was a factor of considerable weight which outweighed what little harm has occurred to the visual character and appearance of the area.

Residential amenity – effect on existing dwellings

Given the orientation of neighbouring buildings to the panel there is little material impact onto neighbours beyond the occasional occurrence of some reflection from the collection tubes. Neighbour's residential amenities have therefore been unharmed. While it is visible from Downside to the north, it is approximately 40m from the nearest dwelling in that street, and at a lower level, and its impact on amenity is not considered to be significant.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason:-

The proposed development has taken place without detriment to the local environment and does not detract from the character or appearance of the area. It does not result in any detriment to the amenities of neighbouring properties and consequently does not conflict with the saved policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AH7) and the national planning policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework

Subject to Condition:

1. Approved Plans

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.

Is recommendation contrary to any representations? Y

Case Officer signed: Matthew Porter Date:14 -6-13

Authorised and signed by: Peter Barnett Date: 17 June 2013