Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1082/12 **Recommendation – Approve**

Site: **281 Albion Street Southwick Brighton West Sussex**

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

Date of site visit: 16.11.2012

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application property comprises the upper floor 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 flats in 1930. 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. One, in the north-west corner serves the ground-floor flat, although it also accommodates external steps serving the first-floor flat leading to a gate in the rear boundary. The other outdoor area, in the north-east corner of the site, serves the first-floor flat.

Permission is sought to convert the existing 3-bedroom flat into a studio flat and a 1-bedroom flat. There would be no external alterations. Both flats would be accessed from the original entrance via the existing stairs. A bin store is located within the walled front garden. A cycle store is proposed within the enclosed outdoor area in the north-east site corner, which would be shared by both flats.

Relevant Planning History

Consultations:-

The Highway Authority comments:- *This proposal has been considered by means of a desktop study, using the information and plans submitted with this application, in conjunction with other available WSCC map information. A site visit can be arranged on request.*

The proposal is for a single dwelling unit with access onto Albion Street via an existing access point. From an inspection of the plans alone, there is no apparent visibility issue at the point of access onto Albion Street.

The most recently available verified accident records reveal there have been no personal injury accidents in the vicinity of the existing point of access, indicating a low risk of highway safety issues with this proposal.

If the LPA are minded to approve this application, a condition regarding secure cycle storage should be included."

HSE (PADHI+) does not advise on safety grounds against the granting of planning permission.

Adur and Worthing Councils: The EHO (Housing) comments:- "*I am making the presumption that there will be a toilet and WHB located in the new bathroom for the 1-bed flat. I am therefore also assuming that Building Control will ensure that there is proper connection of a new SVP and foul drain to the existing foul sewer system.*

There are no details of the flat or property below so it is not possible to gauge whether the stacking is sympathetic. Other than that no adverse comments."

Representations: - No third party representations have been 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'
South East Plan (GOSE 2009): CC1, CC6, H1, H2, H4, H6, BE1
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 lend itself to use as family accommodation given the lack of private amenity space (the small area in the NE corner is overlooked by windows in the ground-floor flat) and no off-street parking provision.

Visual amenity

There would be no external alterations to the existing building.

At present the refuse bins (4 in total) serving the existing flats are stored within the front garden, adjacent to the side wall of the dwelling. The submitted plan suggests that the number of bins would increase to 6, which would be even more unsightly. The bins serving the proposed first-floor flats could be stored within the enclosed area to the side of the building, which would improve the appearance of the property from the main A259.

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 and the first-floor flat would have an internal floor area of 47.7sqm which exceed the minimum size requirements (of 30sqm and 45sqm respectively) in the Council's SPG Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions'.

A small L-shaped area of outdoor space is available in the NE site corner, although this is directly overlooked by windows in the ground-floor flat and is therefore not private.

Residential amenity – effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers

No new windows are proposed. Existing windows in the first-floor flat overlook the small amenity space in the NW site corner, and there are also external steps leading down into this area. The intensity of overlooking would be increased as a result of the sub-division of the flat into 2 units, but is not considered unacceptable. Restricting the use of the external steps could be considered unreasonable since the steps would not necessarily be used any more frequently or differently than at present.

No details of the ground-floor flat (No.279) have been provided, so the 'stacking' arrangement is unknown. However, sound insulation is dealt with and 'tested' under the Building Regulations and there would be nothing to prevent the occupier of the first-floor flat using the bedroom as a living room or visa versa.

Accessibility and parking

There is no parking provision within the curtilage of the existing flats (although it appears vehicles probably 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 and (more frequently) from Southwick district centre. No objection has been raised by the Highway Authority subject to the provision of cycle store. This is shown within the small L-shaped side garden. It should be secure and covered, and this could be dealt with by a condition.

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 South East Plan (CC1, CC6, H1, H2, H4, H6, BE1).

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Standard 3 year time limit
2. The refuse bins serving the proposed flats shall be stored within the enclosed side garden in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
3. Precise details of the secure, covered cycle storage to serve the proposed flats shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed cycle storage provision shall be implemented prior to first occupation and shall thereafter be retained.
4. Approved Plans
   Site Location Plan – date valid 28 Sept 2012
   Block Plan – date valid 28 Sept 2012
   Drawing 12/773/01 – date valid 28 Sept 2012
   Layout Plan – 7 Feb 2013

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: 11 Feb 2013
Authorised by:	Gary Peck	Date: 12 February 2013