Expires 17/4/08

Application Number: ADC/0109/08 Recommendation – REFUSE

Site: Westcroft, West Street, Sompting

Proposal: Demolish existing garage and replace with three storey building to provide garage, games room and self-contained two bedroom flat with link to existing building

The Application

Westcroft is a large two storey detached property located outside the Planning Boundary and within the Sompting Conservation Area and Strategic Gap between Lancing and Shoreham. It is proposed to demolish an existing flat roofed double garage at the side of the property and to construct a three storey extension with a double garage on the ground floor, a games room at first floor and a self contained annex comprising two bedrooms, a lounge, kitchen and bathroom on the second floor. The upper floors of the extension would be separated from the main house by 3.8m and attached to the main house only at ground floor level by a narrow single storey link set back from the building frontage by 6.5m.

The site has a total frontage of some 40m with the area to the side of the existing house some 12m in width. The land level rises up from West Street by 2-3m and the proposed extension is to be set into the ground by approximately 1m. The extension will measure 8.8m high (from the new lower ground), 7.45m wide and 9.96m deep, set back from the street by 10m in line with the existing house. It is to be finished in facing brickwork, render, tile hanging and roof tiles to match the main house.

The site is bordered to the east by a row of cottages on lower ground known as Rooksacre Cottages. The nearest one (no.3) has two first floor windows with the lower half of the property set behind a flint wall on the boundary. To the north (rear), on higher ground, lies a further pair of cottages, with the blank side gable of the nearest cottage facing the site.

Consultations and Representations

County Planning Services (Conservation Architect) – this is an overbearing proposal. It does not fit satisfactorily alongside the main house.

County Transport Planning Services - From an inspection of the plans alone, there is no apparent visibility or highway safety issue at the point of access onto West Street. The applicant should ensure that visibility splays of 2.2 metres by 2.2 metres are present at the point of access.

Any planning permission to this dwelling is to be subject to a Section 106 agreement covering a contribution of £1,320.

Third Parties – Sompting Parish Council – Objects on the basis that it is out of keeping with, and detrimental to, the amenity of the conservation area.

It is felt that the new building could become a stand alone property that would not set a good precedent and that it could exacerbate existing parking and access problems in the village.

1 letter received from the occupier of 3 Rooksacre Cottage confirming that he has no objection, although expresses concern at a possible loss of light should the building be higher and a loss of privacy if any extra windows were added to the east wall facing his property.

ADCAG – consider the front elevation would be considerably improved by the addition of a brick pier dividing the opening into two. Support raising the ridge line so that it appears deeper and more in proportion with the bulk of the building.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005): LOC2, CH3, CH4, DEV1
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993 – 2006 (ADC 1996): AG1, AC1, AC4, AH7, AB4 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising Development Control Standard No.3 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings'
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM 2005)
PPG15 'Planning and the Historic Environment'

Planning Assessment

Policies

Policy CH3 of the Structure Plan and Policy AC4 of the Local Plan lists 'strategic gaps' of countryside separating built-up areas (including that between Lancing and Shoreham in which the site is located) in order to preserve the separate identity and character of the settlements concerned. It states that any development which would undermine this objective or lead to the actual or perceived coalescence of settlements should not be permitted.

Structure Plan policies seek to protect, and where possible, enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area, requiring high standards of design, layout and construction (DEV1). Within conservation areas the aim is to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area, as set out in policy CH4. Policy AH7 of the Local Plan states that extensions and alterations should be designed so as not to result in an unacceptable degree of overlooking, a loss of natural light or an overbearing effect on neighbouring dwellings. They should be of sympathetic design and materials to the original dwelling and the area in general. Policy AB4 requires a high standard of design and construction materials such as to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Policy AC1 of the Adur District Local Plan seeks to protect the countryside from development which does not need a countryside location and states that

permission will not normally be granted for the extension of isolated groups of buildings or the consolidation of linear or sporadic development.

Government policy is set out in Planning Policy Statement PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development'. Relevant paragraphs are 17, which refers to the commitment to protecting and improving the environment; 18 which states that planning should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design; and 34 which states that good design is indivisible from good planning and that design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area, should not be accepted.

Visual amenity and impact on conservation area

The proposed extension effectively reads as a substantial separate building. It is three storeys high and, while lower than the ridge of the original house, is not considered to be of a sympathetic design and will compete visually with the main house. It is to be set into the ground but will still be at a higher level than West Street and will form a dominant and overbearing feature which will harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The proposal will result in a new dwelling within the countryside. It is not clear whether the proposal is for a family member but it seems likely given the link to the main house. Nevertheless, the creation of a self contained flat within a building of this scale is tantamount to the formation of a new dwelling within the countryside and Strategic Gap and will visually close the gap between Westcroft and Rooksacre Cottages, consolidating the linear and sporadic nature of development in this location and extending this isolated group of buildings to the detriment of the character of the area.

Residential amenity

The nearest property to the east is separated from the site by a driveway to the cottages at the rear, leaving a gap of 5m between the proposed building and 3 Rooksacre Cottage. The proposed building is set back from the line of cottages to the east and projects further to the rear by approximately 3.5m. It has a larger footprint than the existing garage and will bring the building 1.5m nearer to the road. Its ridge height will be just below the main ridge of the adjacent cottage, which has first floor windows facing the site. The only window to face east will be an obscure glazed bathroom window so overlooking will not be an issue. However, it is considered that the proximity, height and position of the building will adversely affect light and outlook for the occupiers of 3 Rooksacre Cottage, to the detriment of their residential amenity.

To the north, the nearest cottage is on higher ground, 12.5m away. It has a blank side elevation facing the site and, while a bedroom and kitchen window

will face towards that property, it is not considered that any loss of privacy will occur.

Recommendation

REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The proposal, by reason of its scale, height and design would form a dominant and incongruous building which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, contrary to policies AB4 and AH7 of the Adur District Local Plan and policies CH4 and DEV1 of the West Sussex Structure Plan

2. The proposed building, by reason of its height, position and proximity to the boundary, would result in an overbearing form of development which would cause a loss of light and outlook for the occupiers of 3 Rooksacre Cottage to the detriment of their residential amenities, contrary to policy AH7 of the Adur District Local Plan and policy DEV1 of the West Sussex Structure Plan.

3. The proposal is tantamount to the creation of a new dwelling within the countryside, consolidating ~~the linear and sporadic nature of development in this location and extending the presently isolated~~ the existing group of buildings to the detriment of the character of the area and the integrity of the Strategic Gap, contrary to policies AC1 and AC4 of the Adur District Local Plan and policies LOC2 and CH3 of the West Sussex Structure Plan

Case Officer P Barnett ..... Date 8/4/08 .....