Expiry Date - 01/08/2024

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/0725/24 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: 34 Alexandra Road Worthing West Sussex

Proposal: Revert two converted flats back to a single dwelling, four bedroom Edwardian home.

Date of site visit: 25/07/2024

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Site and Surroundings

The site is located to the east of Alexandra Road within a residential area of Worthing. The property comprises a two storey, terraced property. The property is currently occupied as two x 2 bedroom flats, one at ground floor and one at first floor. The garden to the rear of the site has been split into two separate amenity spaces. There is no off road parking provision.

Many of these houses have been converted into flats and many remain as single dwelling family houses. The adjoining property (south) at No.32 is split into two flats and the property to the north at No.30 is occupied as a single dwellinghouse. The property is not within a conservation area and is not a listed building.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for conversion of two flats back into a single dwelling as originally built. The rear external staircase will be removed, and doors added at the ground floor to the garden. The fencing will also be removed to create a single amenity space.

Relevant Planning History:
None

Consultations:
Environmental Health – Conditions for hours of works suggested.

Private Sector Housing - No objections

WSCC Highways - This proposal is to revert two converted flats back to a single dwelling, four-bedroom Edwardian home. The site is located on Alexandra Road, an unclassified road subject to a speed restriction of 30 mph.

The LHA does not anticipate that the proposals would give rise to a material intensification of movements to or from the site. Existing access and parking arrangements will be unaffected by the proposals.

In summary, the LHA does not consider that this proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in 'severe' cumulative impacts on the operation of the highway network, therefore is not contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 115), and that there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

WSP - Thank you for your consultation on the above site. We have reviewed the application as the drainage consultant acting on behalf of the Council and wish to make the following comments.

The applicant is applying to revert two converted flats back to a single dwelling, four-bedroom Edwardian home. The application is to Worthing Borough Council.

Following a review of the submitted information, we have no objection on surface water grounds. Due to the site, size, location, and type of development we would recommend the approval of the application.

Southern Water – Southern Water requires a formal application for any new connection to the public foul sewer to be made by the applicant or developer.

It is possible that a sewer now deemed to be public could be crossing the development site. Therefore, should any sewer be found during construction works, an investigation of the sewer will be required to ascertain its ownership before any further works commence on site.

Representations:

None received

Relevant Planning Policies

Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036 (WBC 2023): Policies:
SP1, SS1, DM1, DM2, DM5, DM15, DM16, DM17, DM20, DM22
National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
National Planning Practice Guidance
Nationally Described Space Standards (March 2015)
SPD 'Space Standards' (WBC 2012)
SDP 'A Guide to Residential Development' (WBC 2013)
CIL Charging Schedule (Aug 2021)

Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

The Worthing Local Plan was adopted on 28th March 2023. Policy SS1 sets out the Housing supply over the period 2020-2036 and gives a total figure of 3672 (an annual target of 230 dwellings per annum).

Paragraph 74 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. The supply of deliverable sites should include a buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land, or 20% where there has been a significant under delivery over the previous three years.

The Inspectors report at Paragraph 176 states:

"I am satisfied that this is a reasonable assessment of likely deliverable supply. This comfortably exceeds the likely five-year housing land requirement. It is possible that some sites may stall or take longer to start delivering new housing, especially taking into account uncertainties surrounding the outcome of Brexit and COVID-19. However, there is sufficient headroom to be reasonably confident that a five-year supply of deliverable housing land would exist at adoption."

The Inspector was satisfied that the housing requirement represents a reasonable and realistic assessment of the limited capacity of the Borough.

The most recent housing trajectory and 5-year housing land supply for Worthing can be found in the Annual Monitoring Report 2022-2023. Table 9 indicates the Five-Year Supply measured against the adopted WLP annual target of 230 dwellings plus a 20% buffer, which results in a 7 year supply of deliverable sites.

To maintain the supply of housing paragraph 79 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to monitor progress in building out sites with planning permission. Where the Housing Delivery test indicates delivery has fallen below 75% of the local planning authorities housing requirement over the previous three years, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies, in addition to the requirement for an Action plan and 20% buffer.

The latest Housing Delivery Test was published in December 2023 and Worthing Borough Council scored 33%. Therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies as the delivery of housing was less than 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.

The proposal would result in the net loss of a dwelling unit comprising a 2 bedroom flat.

WLP Policy DM1 (e) states that planning applications that result in the loss of residential accommodation will not be permitted unless one or more of a number of listed exceptions apply. One of the listed exceptions vi) states, *'applications for the conversion of flats … back to family sized homes will be considered on their merits taking account of other considerations including, for*

example, amenity considerations and evidence regarding the need for family homes'.

Paragraph 5.17 of the WLP refers to the need to retain existing homes especially larger family homes (3 + beds). It states that there is a need to ensure a range of housing dwelling types and sizes 'to meet the identified housing needs, facilitate housing choice and achieve mixed and balanced communities'.

The most recent SHMA was undertaken in 2020 and identifies a need for all different sizes of homes in the market and social housing sectors for Worthing. The need for 4-bedroom family housing is 10-20% and for 2-bedroom flats is 40-45%.

The site is within a sustainable location with good access to public transport and within walking distance of a range of local facilities including shops, schools and public open space.

The property was originally built and occupied as a single family dwelling and when considered on its own merits and in context with the amenity issues identified above, reverting back to a single unit would be consistent with the aims of Policy DM1 to provide a mix of housing, including larger family homes and with the exceptions listed in e) vi).

Visual Amenity

The only external change proposed by this application is the removal of the fencing that splits the garden and the reversion to the original garden with the removal of an external staircase also part of this. As such this will not impact the visual amenity of the street scene.

With the introduction of the bi folding doors there will be a minor amendment to the visual amenity of the host dwelling. However, with the location to the rear of the site there will not be any impact on the visual amenity of the street scene.

There would be no adverse impact on the character of the property or the visual amenities of the locality as a result of this application.

Residential Amenity – Future Occupiers

The proposed single dwelling would have a GIA of approximately 98sqm providing 4 bedrooms. The dwelling would exceed the Government's minimum standard of 97sqm for a 4-bedroom, 5-person dwelling and would meet the storage requirements for this size of dwelling.

The proposed conversion of the property back into a family home would provide generous living accommodation, storage space and private external amenity space resulting in a high standard of accommodation for the occupants.

Residential Amenity – Neighbours

The only external alteration proposed are in the form of a removed staircase within the rear garden and introduction of a set of bifolding doors to the rear. This will reduce the impact the neighbouring property through the removal of potential overlooking that may be achieved. There are not proposed to be any other external alterations that would introduce any further overlooking, overshadowing or overdevelopment. The bi folding doors to be located on the ground floor will only provide views that are currently available. There would be no changes to the external space or parking provision and there would be no detrimental impact on the residential amenities of adjacent occupiers.

Access and Highways

WSCC Highways have not raised any objection in principle to the conversion of the property back to a single dwelling house. There will be on street parking available and it is not considered that the use as a single dwellinghouse would result in more parking or highway demand than the existing use as two flats.

There are no transport grounds to resist the proposal.

Sustainable Development

The proposal involves the re-use of existing building stock which is inherently sustainable.

CIL

No additional floor area is created by the proposed development and therefore no CIL is payable.

Conclusion

The conversion of this property back to a single family dwelling would be consistent with the character of the street scene which consists of large semi-detached houses many of which have been converted to flats but more have been retained as single dwelling houses. The property is sustainably located within easy walking distance of schools and public transport. A very good standard of family housing would be provided for the future occupiers and the proposal would address the current amenity issues resulting from use as two flats.

On balance, the loss of a dwelling unit is considered acceptable when considered in context with the benefits of conversion in addressing amenity issues. It should be noted that approval of this application is only possible due to it falling within one of the exceptions set out under Policy DM1 e) vi) and in relation to the amenity issues identified and should not be considered to set a precedent for other applications resulting in the loss of a dwelling unit.

Expiry Date - 01/08/2024

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard time limit
3. Materials to Match Existing
4. Hours of Works

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 letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Finlay Gardner Date: 29/07/2024

Authorised by: Louise Prew Date: 29/07/2024