Application Number: ADC/0754/07 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: All Souls Centre, Downsway, Southwick BN42 4WB

Proposal: Demolition of existing building and erection of 3 dwellinghouses and garages (outline application)

The Application

The disused All Souls Church and Community Centre lies on the west side of Downsway, to the north of the access road to the cemetery and to the south of Church House Close. It lies opposite the road junction with Highdown.

Downsway slopes steeply uphill northwards. To the south are bungalows on both sides of Downsway. Opposite the site, at the end of Highdown, are two-storey semi-detached houses (No's 56 & 58 Downsway and No's 1 &2 Highdown), both of which are recessed slightly into the hillside minimising their overall height. Directly to the north and west, No's 1 & 4 Church House Close are chalet style bungalows, both with south-facing dormers, and to the north-west are two small bungalows with low profile roofs.

The site is currently occupied by a single-storey church with gabled ends and low profile copper roof; attached to the main building are flat roofed additions to the north and south sides. The site is 0.09 hectare in size with garden space and planting surrounding the existing building. A boundary wall separates the site from No.1 Church House Close which is sited on lower ground at the rear. There is a low wall and hedge on the north, front (east) and south sides. The site has pedestrian access from Downsway, and there is no on-site parking facility.

The supporting statement from the Saint Michael and All Angels Church states that both the Church and community facility had experienced deterioration in use by groups; is inaccessible for disabled users; and requires major expenditure on structural and electrical work. It was felt that given the very low levels of use that the expenditure could not be justified. It is stated that there are other facilities which accommodate the congregation and use adequately.

The proposal as originally submitted was for a terrace of 4 houses with parking to the rear and access from Church House Close. Following objections, it has now been amended to 3 detached chalet bungalows again with parking at the rear and similar access. The application is in Outline only and determination is requested on the principle of the development only. Layout, scale, external appearance, means of access and landscaping are reserved matters and would form the subject of a separate reserved matters application should outline permission be granted.

Consultations and Representations

County Transport Planning Services: No objection.

Third Parties: 5 letters have been received, 4 of which (from No's 2, 3 & 4 Church House Close and No.58 Downsway) object.

The resident of No. 2 Church House Close feels that the Close is not large enough for such a large development, that it would cause stress and congestion so close to her front door. They feel that there would be a problem with access for emergency vehicles due to additional on street parking.
The residents of No. 3 Church House Close object on the grounds that, being disabled, they often need an ambulance and parking is very difficult for them; if people park in Church House Close they and the service vehicles would not be able to get by. They also feel that the proposals would devalue of their property and state the land has had a covenant on it for 50 years (NB. not planning matters).
No.4 Church House Close objects to the congestion and stress to the occupants of the Close that would be caused by the vehicular access to the proposed garages. The proposed buildings would cause loss of light and privacy. They also object to the moving of the building line.
No.58 Downsway objects on the height, noise and traffic, and to the loss privacy and light.

There has been one letter of support for the proposed development from the owner of No.1 Church House Close.

[NB. The residents of No's 2, 3 & 4 Church House Close have requested to speak at the committee meeting]

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, NE1, CH1, ERA1, DEV1, DEV4-5.
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AH2, AH5, AB23, AB25-27, ACS5 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising:-Development Control Standard No.2 'Space Around New Dwellings and Flats'.
Revised West Sussex Parking Standards and Transport Contributions Methodology (WSCC 2003 and ADC 2004)
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005)
PPS3 ' Housing' (DCLG 2006)

Planning Assessment

Policies

Policy ACS5 states that development involving the loss of an existing community facility will not be permitted. In this instance, the use as a church and meeting hall has already ceased because of such a serious decline in use

as to render it unviable. Whilst this northern part of Southwick lacks other community halls, on balance, it is considered unlikely that a viable alternative community use can be found for the building. It is considered that an exception should be made, having regard to the need for additional housing development.

The site is located within a residential part of the built-up area and the proposal constitutes infilling as provided for in both Structure and Local Plan policies. There is no objection in principle to infill development within the built-up area and, in order to meet the housing requirements of the approved Structure Plan and Local Plan, a significant proportion of new housing development by way of 'unidentified' small infill sites is necessary.

Structure Plan policies give significant weight to making the best use of land through higher density development provided that the impact on the character of the area and environment is acceptable (LOC1, ERA1, CH1) and subject to policy DEV1 requiring high quality development. Policy DEV4 states (amongst other things) that development should not be permitted unless the travel needs it generates are met. DEV5 states that "Development should not be permitted unless the level of parking is compatible with the need to avoid environmental or safety problems and the need is to encourage walking, cycling and the use of passenger transport where this is or can be a realistic alternative".

Local Plan policy AH2 relates to new residential development (by way of infilling and redevelopment) and states that new dwellings should be designed so that their appearance, character and scale create a pleasant place in which to live and are in keeping with and enhance the existing local environment with particular attention being paid to architectural form, height, materials, density, layout of buildings and hardsurfaced areas.

Government policy guidance PPS3 encourages best use of urban land for housing at higher densities (minimum 30 dwellings per hectare) and without rigid application of parking and amenity space standards.

Density and character

The application as originally submitted proposed a single terrace of 4 houses (depicted with the central two houses also having rooms in the roof), standing forward of the general building line. This was considered to be out of character for an area which is consists mainly of detached and semi-detached single and two-storey dwellings. The proposal would have appeared very dominant and overbearing within a streetscene of lower level roof forms.

The applicant has now amended the scheme and proposes 3 chalet bungalows.

The density of the application as amended is 32 dwellings per hectare which is in line with Government Guidance and only slightly lower than the

surrounding average density. Given the variety of housing styles it would not be particularly out of keeping.

The plans supplied are purely indicative but can give an idea of the expected mass and bulk of the proposed buildings. Given the expected separation between the dwellings (approximately 2m in each case) is considered they would not have an acceptably overbearing or uncharacteristic appearance.

Owing to the proposed parking at the rear, the building line of the proposed dwellings would have to be closer to the road than existing dwellings on the west side of Downsway. Given that there is Church House Close to the north and the Cemetery access to the south, the site does have a visual separation making this deviation in the building line acceptable. However, approval of the siting is not sought as part of this outline application.

Residential amenity – surrounding dwellings

The proposed chalet bungalows would have rooms in the roof with dormer windows. The rear dormers as indicated on the supplementary plans would be 27m from the property to the rear which exceeds the minimum standard of 22m and is considered acceptable in terms of privacy. Other details with regards to windows and room layouts will be determined in a reserved matters application.

There would not be an adverse effect on the amount of light or outlook to other properties.

Access

WSCC have no objection to the proposed redevelopment and a TAD contribution is not required in this instance due to the allowance made for the existing uses on the site.

The proposals include off-street parking at the rear off Church House Close, on the north side of the site. This road has no parking restrictions and residents complain about its use by persons visiting the cemetery. Although the proposal may result in occasional parking in the street, it is not considered likely to cause safety or obstruction problems warranting refusal.

Recommendation

APPROVE for reason that:-

Although the proposal involves the loss of a community facility which would normally be resisted under policy ACS5 of the Adur District Local Plan, the LPA is satisfied that such use is no longer viable and that an exception should be made. The proposed development is within the built-up area would help meet the need for additional housing without detraction from the existing local urban environment. It can take place without detraction from highway safety. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District

Local Plan (AG1, AB25-27, AH2, AH5) and the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (LOC1, NE1, CH1, ERA1, DEV1, DEV4-5)

Subject to: –

1. C1A (Standard Outline condition)
2. C1Bi (Standard outline time limit)
3. C7Cii (Details of walls/fences to be approved and implemented)
4. C8Gii (Details of car parking to be approved, provided and retained)
5. C9E (Visibility splays for access to be provided and retained)
6. C9N (Temporary provision for contractors' vehicles, materials, etc. on site)
7. C9S (Temporary wheel cleaning facility during construction work)
8. C11Ai (Landscaping scheme to be approved and implemented and replacement of trees that die)
9. C12Ai (External materials for walls and roofs to be approved)
10. C14Aiv(Permission relates to amended ~~plan~~ application received on 17 January 2008)
11. C18A (Details of floor levels to be approved)

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