Application Number: ADC/0021/09 **Recommendation - APPROVE**

Site: **Downsway Centre, Downsway, Southwick BN42 4WB**

Proposal: **Demolition of existing building and erection of 2 pairs of semi-detached houses (2 two-bedroom and 2 three-bedroom) with vehicular access off Church House Close to rear parking spaces**

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.

Outline planning permission has been granted for the demolition of the existing building and redevelopment with 3 dwellinghouses and garages (ADC/0754/07). The details of layout, scale, external appearance, means of access, and landscaping of the site were all subject to reserved matters.

A subsequent full application for two pairs of 3-bedroom semi-detached houses (ADC/0507/08) was withdrawn after concerns were raised regarding the increase in scale of the proposed development; the plain and overbearing southern elevation; the encroachment over the established building line; the effect of the front dormers on the appearance of the buildings; the level of parking provision being proposed (1 space per dwelling).

The present revised application has now been submitted seeking full permission for two pairs of semi-detached houses with parking, bin and cycle storage to the rear, with vehicular access onto Church House Close and pedestrian access onto Downsway. The houses would front Downsway and would comprised of a pair of two-bedroom houses on the southern half of the site, and a pair of three-bedroom houses on the northern half. The houses would be set back from Downsway by 7m with rear gardens 13m–14m in length. A 1m gap would be provided between the houses and the northern and southern side boundaries and there would be a two metre gap between the two pairs of houses. The pair of three-bedroom houses would each be 8.1m high, by 5.5m wide, by 7.5m in depth, whilst the pair of two-bedroom houses would each be 7.5m in height, by 5.5m in width, by 7.5m in depth.

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 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. To the north, beyond No.4 Church House Close, the building pattern returns to being semi-detached houses.

The site is currently occupied by a single-storey church building 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 currently no on-site parking facility.

The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, and a Site Waste Management Plan. The design and access statement says that the proposals will provide a total of 4 new houses, together with associated parking, gardens, cycle and bin storage and pedestrian access to Downsway, and vehicular access to Church House Close. The units would have a gross internal floor area of 93sqm. The two-bedroom houses would have bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor with living accommodation and a disabled accessible WC at ground floor level. The three-bedroom houses would differ by having an additional bedroom and en-suite shower room in the roof space, with one rear (west) facing dormer. The dormer would be 0.9m wide by 1.5m in height and zinc or lead clad.

They state that the Downsway centre has suffered a serious decline in use and is now redundant. The existing building is somewhat alien in form and layout, and the proposed development will fit in with the general street pattern and in particular the semi-detached style of housing immediately opposite. The mature tree on site will be retained and supplemented with new planting as shown. The new infill buildings have been designed to help restore the continuity and rhythm of the street frontage, and to respect the scale and traditional form of this part of Southwick.

Consultations and Representations

West Sussex County Council: No objection. There is no apparent visibility onto Downsway and 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 to highway safety with the proposal. Proposed parking is within WSCC maximum standards and, although it is possible that this may result in some additional on-street parking, in light of the small scale of the proposal, it is not thought that there will be any detriment to highway safety. Any approval should be subject to pedestrian 2m by 2m visibility splays, on-site provision for contractor vehicles and materials, and a section 106 Obligation that includes an undertaking to pay the sustainable transport contribution (TAD) of £5,120.

Adur District Council: The Environmental Health Officer has no objection. The Waste Strategy Manager confirms that waste and recycling bins should be placed either at the vehicle entrance in Church House Close or at the front edge of the properties in Downsway.

Third Parties: 2 letters of objection have been received.
The resident of No.56 Downsway feels that 4 houses are too many for the site and that chalet-bungalows rather than two-storey houses would be more appropriate to neighbouring properties. She also considers that smaller dwellings would be less obtrusive to the views and loss of light to home owners in Church House Close. More parking spaces are needed (2 parking spaces per house) in order not to impact on parking in Highdown.
The resident of No.3 Church House Close feels that the vehicular access should be onto Downsway as with other bungalows in the road. They feel that the proposed development is adversely affecting the sale of their property.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, CH1, NE1, 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:-
Devt 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

The principle of redevelopment of the site with dwellings is already established by the existing permission. 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, it was considered unlikely that a viable alternative community use could be found for the building.

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. 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 density of the development is 43 dwellings per hectare (dph) which is in line with Government Guidance, and only slightly higher than the average density of the houses in Highdown (40dph) and those further to the north in Downsway (38dph). However, the proposals represent an increase in density from the bungalows further to the south (28dph). Given the variety of housing styles in the vicinity, it is considered that 4 houses would not be particularly out of keeping, or result in an overdeveloped site.

The applicant has supplied a streetscene plan which indicates the height of the proposed houses in the context to the neighbouring properties (No.4 Church House Close & No.49 Downsway). The gradient of Downsway is steep and the proposed houses would be dug down to a level foundation similar to the houses directly opposite in Highdown. As stated the road and cemetery access way either side of the site provided adequate separation between the built form of the proposals and the adjacent dwellings and it is considered these factors would prevent the houses from having an unacceptably overbearing or uncharacteristic appearance.

The design of the current scheme has been adapted so as to conform to the building line within the road. As a result of this, the rear gardens are under the minimum area stated in the Council's standards (68sqm as opposed to 85sqm). However, it is considered the 2 three-bedroom houses would have the benefit of more private space at the front of the houses due to the lower floor level, in addition to the proposed front boundary planting. It is considered that the benefit to the amenity of the surrounding area by retaining the building line outweighs the negative impact of the slightly smaller that average rear garden space.

The design of the houses themselves relate well to each other and the surrounding area. They use a similar pallette of materials (brick, plain tiles, painted timber). The part-hip roofed design minimises the visual bulk of the buildings and it is not considered that they are particularly out of character. There are slight design differences between the two pairs of houses but it is not considered that these render the scheme incongruous or out of keeping in an area of various building types.

Residential amenity – effect on existing dwellings

The proposed northernmost pair of houses would have rooms in the roof with a small dormer window per dwelling. The rear dormers as indicated on the plans would be 26m and 25m respectively to the property to the rear which exceeds the Council's minimum standard of 22m between facing principal windows, and is considered acceptable in terms of the effect on privacy.

With regard to the effect on outlook, the dwelling that would be most affected would be No.4 Church House Close directly to the north. No.4 has a large south-facing lounge window which currently enjoys long distance views towards the coast past the existing church building. The proposed houses have been realigned since the two most recent applications so that they now conform to the existing building line on the west of Downsway. In addition the northern pair of houses will be dug down into the hillside to reduce the bulk of the building. The house would project above the road level in Church House Close by 5.7m, and with a part hipped gable sloping away from No.4, it is felt that the appearance would be not be significantly different from a chalet-style bungalow and not in any way overbearing. It is considered that the outlook and amount of light available to the lounge of No.4 would not be affected to an unacceptable level.

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

Access

The site is considered to be in a sustainable location given the access to public transport and local facilities. West Sussex County Council, whilst commenting that there may be an

increase in on-street parking, have no objection to the proposed redevelopment stating that the proposed parking of one space per dwelling is within the maximum standard. The on-site turning space enables cars to enter and leave the site in forward gear. A bus stop is located directly in front of the site and local shops and other bus routes are within walking distance (400m away).

Re-orientation of the parking to the front of the houses was explored by the applicant but WSCC advised that, due to the site being directly opposite the junction with Highdown and the close proximity to the bus stop, parking to the rear would be the safest option.

The main objections to the initial outline application were due to concerns raised about congestion and access to Church House Close. Church House Close is a cul-de-sac 4.1m wide. Owing to its proximity to the cemetery it is regularly used for parking. Nevertheless, single direction traffic is still able to pass when needed and it is considered that, although the proposals may result in occasional parking in Church House Close and the surrounding roads, it is unlikely to cause highway danger or obstruction problems warranting refusal.

A sustainable transport contribution (TAD) of £5,120 is required by a Section 106 Obligation, and a draft agreement has been submitted.

Recommendation

Subject to terms of Obligation

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, AB23, AB25-27, AH2, AH5) and the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (LOC1, NE1, CH1, ERA1, DEV1, DEV4-5)

Subject to: –

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C7Cii (Details of walls/fences to be approved and implemented)
3. C8Bi (Parking spaces and access facilities to be constructed and retained)
4. C8Gii (Details of car and cycle parking related to buildings to be approved, provided and retained) (amended)
5. C9F (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. C18A (Details of floor levels to be approved)

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