Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: **Recommendation – Refuse**
AWDM/0063/12

Site: **7-9 Brunswick Road, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex**

Proposal: **Proposed conversion of existing first floor B1 offices/ancillary A1 storage into 2 x self contained studio flats, with first floor flat-roofed rear extension (over existing flat-roofed rear projection), with access to first floor bin and bicycle store.(7-9 Brunswick Road)**

Date of site visit: 17.01.12

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings
The application relates to a flat roofed 1930's two-storey building within the Conservation Area of Shoreham. The building is currently occupied with a retail shop and sandwich shop (yet to open) at ground floor, and the upper rooms are currently vacant but were previously used for ancillary storage and office space.

The building is of red brick construction to the front with a pebble-dashed side and rear. The northern elevation of the building is adjoined to a flint boundary wall adjacent to a public seating area next to the entrance with the Post Office depot. The rear of the building has been extended with a shallow flat roofed extension 1.8m deep, which sits adjacent to a mono-pitched roof storage building within the grounds of the Post Office depot.

Permission is sought to extend above the rear ground floor extension and adjoin the existing building, to allow enlargements that would increase the floor area to adequately accommodate two studio flats. The flats would be accessed via a central staircase from the front, and would have access to a shared communal bin and cycle store at first floor level.

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The Highways Officer was consulted prior to the application's revision to only being for two studio flats.

Brunswick Road is 'C' classified road subject to a 30 mph speed restriction. There is a small amount of limited on street car parking available outside the site. This application provides a nil car parking facility. This provision does not meet the latest WSCC appropriate level of car parking demand for a development of this size in this location. However consideration also needs to be given to the previous use of the property as office space and the parking demand / movements that would have attracted. In addition to this the site is

located in a sustainable town centre location, in close proximity to local amenities and forms of public transportation. It would not be considered that ownership of a private motor vehicle in this location would be essential, with this in mind I would not consider the lack of parking provision to be of detriment to highway safety. Cycle parking should be included within the application; this must be secure, covered and be capable of storing at least 3 cycles (1 per dwelling). The actual details of the cycle parking facilities should be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

From the information supplied there would be no highway safety concerns raised to this proposal.

Adur & Worthing Councils: The Environmental Health Officer states that there is no outdoor amenity area associated with the units of accommodation, which means there is no facility for drying clothes, etc, and this gives rise to the increased risk of condensation problems. The lack of an outdoor amenity area has also resulted in a bin/bike store on the first floor. Although it is accepted that occupants often store bikes within their own properties, the active encouragement of carrying bikes up and down a flight of stairs is not ideal. The stacking of the accommodation is not sympathetic in that the living room of the top floor flat is stacked above the bedsit below. *[NB The upper flat has now been amended out of the scheme]*

Conservation Advisory Group: No objection.

Representations

Third parties: There have been no third party objections to the proposals.

Relevant Planning Policies
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AH2 and Appendix 11 ‘Supplementary Planning Guidance’ comprising: Development Control Standard No.2 ‘Space around new dwellings and flats’and Good Practice Guidance Note No.2 ‘ Internal Space Standards for New Homes’
South East Plan (GOSE 2009): CC1, CC6, BE1
National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012)

Planning Assessment

Principle
The provision of more dwelling units would help meet the housing requirements for small households as set out in Local Plan policy AH5. Policy AH9 of the Local Plan states that the conversion of dwellinghouses into smaller self-contained units will be permitted providing that: access and car parking provision is acceptable; the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking or noise transmission through party walls; and the type of property concerned and the standard of accommodation to be provided accord to the adopted standards. It also states that the conversion of small family homes will not be permitted.

While the application relates to space above a shop rather than a family home, the principles established in Policy AH9 are considered to be applicable. Policy AS1 seeks to prevent the loss of residential accommodation at upper floor level within shopping areas. The site is in the Conservation Area where there is a statutory duty to pay special attention to the need to preserve or enhance its character or appearance as reflected in local plan policy AB4.

Visual amenity
The proposals will only result in a minor alteration to the appearance of the building from the public areas of the Conservation Area. The small extension to the building will be screened partially from view from the north by the Post Office and other buildings within the street to the south. In terms of the impact on the streetscene it is likely to be very limited, provided the external materials can be made to match the existing building.

Residential amenity proposed dwellings
The Council's internal space standards for new dwellings are set out in the Good Practice Guidance Note adopted in 2010. It states that new studio flats should have a minimum floor area of 32sqm, that the additional storage space, which should be located adjacent to or within the dwelling should be 1.5sqm, and that the living, cooking and eating area should be 22sqm total with a 7sqm sleeping area allocated.

The two proposed flats are substandard in terms of their overall floor area, the southernmost flat being 30.7sqm and the northernmost being 29sqm. The overall internal living/cooking/eating area is also below the standard at 19sqm (when deducting the bathroom and 7sqm allocation for sleeping areas). The storage area assigned to the two flats is at the top of the stairs, and would be required to act as a refuse/recycling and bike store in addition to the expected 1.5sqm of storage per flat. The allocation as proposed would be 2.9sqm for both flats, which again is considered to be below the minimum standards.

Although it is regrettable that the proposed flats would have no outdoor amenity area, this is relatively common in town centre locations, where many other first floor 'above shop' dwellings have no access to amenity spaces of any significance, but rather rely on yards or rear passageways for bin storage etc.

The Environmental Health officer raises concerns regarding the practicality of using the first floor store area for the storage of cycles and bins. It is common that occupants of town centre dwellings (where there is limited outdoor space) rely on storing cycles inside of their buildings. It is felt that the need for an exterior space purely for bin and cycle storage would be unreasonable if there is adequate interior space for such items, and that those spaces are both secure and well ventilated. Such requirements could be covered by planning condition.

Whilst the internalised area for bin and cycle storage could be made acceptable, subject to the compliance with conditions, it is felt that the adequacy of this space, and the overall internal floor area of the proposed studio accommodation would be substandard. The result of which would be overly cramped living conditions and inadequate storage of bins, recycling,

cycles, which would be to the detriment of the residential amenity of future occupiers.

Residential amenity surrounding dwellings
The nearest properties to the proposed studio flats would be above the shops opposite, and to the rear in St. Marys Church 40m away. Between the dwellings in St Marys Close and the site is the large garden with preserved trees for St Marys House, a Grade II listed building which is in use as offices and a dental practice. The rear amenity area does not appear to be used by the adjacent flats in the Vinery.

It is not considered that the conversion would have a detrimental impact on the adjacent properties as a result of overlooking or loss outlook / privacy.

Accessibility and parking
Highways have confirmed that the site sits within a sustainable location, in close proximity to facilities, and shops, and public transport nodes. Shoreham railway station is in very close proximity, as are a number of bus stops.

The adequacy of the cycle storage for the dwellings will need to be confirmed by planning condition, and whilst it has been raised by the EHO that first floor accommodation for bicycles is not ideal it is not considered that this detail would warrant refusal.

Recommendation

REFUSE for the reason:-

The proposed conversion of the upper floor from ancillary storage and B1 Office into two studio flats would result in a substandard level of accommodation and would be an overdevelopment of the site, to the detriment of the character of the area and the residential amenities of future occupiers. The proposal is therefore contrary to saved policy AH9 of the Adur District Local Plan and Good Practice Guidance Note 'Internal Space Standards for New Homes'

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: C. Hone Date: 25.07.12

Authorised by: Peter Barnett Date: 26 July 2012