Application Number: ADC/0147/07 Recommendation - APPROVE

Site: **Houseboat 'Enstone', 36 Riverbank Shoreham-by-Sea**

Proposal: **Alteration of houseboat with provision of new superstructure and use as 2 flats; and erection of new jetty (with aquarium)**

The application relates to a mooring plot with a disused houseboat undergoing repair. The lower hull is to be covered in a hot air-welded black polythene sheet.

The houseboat is 24m long and 5.7m wide. The proposed new superstructure would be 11m long and 4.8m wide, with an overall height of 4.7m above the mudflat (of which 2m would be above the deck level of the houseboat). Its front and sides would be at a raked angle and its roof is shown contiguous with the front, rear and sides, the join being curved.

The proposed new jetty would comprise a platform 4.9m by 5.6m plus a gangplank (14m long and 1m wide) onto the houseboat. Mounted on this would be an aquarium (2m by 1m).

Also proposed in the application (as submitted), on the opposite (landward) side of the riverbank public footpath, was a shed 5.2m wide and 7.2m long. However, this has now been withdrawn from the application. This was shown occupying virtually the full width of the area between the path and the boundary at the foot of the bank. Its roof was shown about 1.5m above the level of the footpath and, together with the sloping sides, was proposed to be covered in earth approx 130mm (5 inches) thick and planted with grass and flowers.

A Design & Access Statement accompanies the application. It is stated that the houseboat is intended to be connected to the public sewer and that it is intended to let it probably as 2 self-contained 'flats'.

Consultations and Representations

English Nature: No objection but requests that the jetty be constructed in a way that allows some light penetration to any saltmarsh plants that may be below. The proposed shed is not within the SSSI.

Environment Agency: Objected to the proposed works on the landward side of the riverbank because they would severely restrict the options for the Agency's proposals for improvements to the river defences through the Adur Tidal Walls (west bank) Project which are currently being investigated. They also have ecological concerns regarding habitat protection.

Director of Services: The EHO objects to the additional effluent resulting from use of the boat as 2 flats unless it is connected to the public sewer. With regard to the shed comments that it may interfere with flood defences and light, as well as setting an undesirable precedent.

Third Parties: 4 letters/e-mail of objection and concern have been received from residents at No's 6 & 10 Beach Green and 28 Kings Walk and from the Shoreham Beach Residents Association.

No.6 objects to the aquarium because it would attract more people with resultant loss of privacy and noise, as would the use of the boat as 2 flats. A larger superstructure would mean she would no longer enjoy her river view. The houseboats are meant to be something different and good to look at, not an eyesore.

No.10 comment that the proposals are very close to the back of his house (and bedroom) and would worsen the noise he already suffers from the public path and further reduce privacy as people going to the shed would walk right past the back of his balcony which is his only outdoor space. It may also block his view of the river.

The other representation, from a resident on a different part of Shoreham Beach, states that she thought this historic boat was being restored not turned into a block of flats and expresses great concern about the increasing level of sheds, fences and other structures spreading out along the footpath, causing loss of river and downland views. The Council should take steps to limit this.

The Shoreham Beach Residents Association object, stating that the moorings are for houseboats in single family occupation, not blocks of flats; the large shed could seriously weaken the sea defences, remove a lizard grazing area and restrict the view of the river; the jetty with an aquarium is overly large, unnecessary and could weaken the bank; and there is no mention of improving the sewage disposal system.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (WSCC 2005): LOC2, CH3, ERA2, DEV1
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996): AG1, AC1, AC4, AC10, AB16
Adur Development Plan – Submission Core Strategy 2006-26 (ADC 2007): ENV5, ENV6, ENV8, ENV10
Draft 'Good Practice Guide for Houseboats' (ADC Dec 2006)
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005)
PPS7 "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" (ODPM 2004)
PPS9 "Biodiversity and Geological Conservation" (ODPM 2005)
PPG20 "Coastal Planning" (DoE 1992)

Planning Assessment

Policies

The site lies within the Adur Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), of national importance principally because of its habitat for wading birds. It forms part of the 'strategic gap' of countryside separating built-up areas as defined in the Local Plan. There is a policy objection to new development unless there are compelling circumstances but, in previous cases, the view has been taken that, in principle, the enlargement of superstructures is acceptable to meet the needs of the householder concerned provided their scale is appropriate.
Submission Core Strategy policy ENV8 states that "The principle of maintaining the existing areas on the river for houseboat use is supported as long as this does not harm nature conservation or residential amenity, and enhances the wider river setting - Account will also be taken of the need for flood defence works along the river".

Visual amenity

The structure forming the subject of the present application involves a total building length of approximately 11m, which is 45% of the length of the houseboat (24m). This complies with the Council's draft 'Good Practice Guide for Houseboats' which states that superstructures should not exceed 12m long or 66% of the length of the boat.

Moreover, with its overall height of only 4.7m, it is relatively low and its appearance is of good quality with an essentially 'nautical' character. Thus, it clearly conforms to the draft 'Code of Good Practice' and would set a good example for others to follow. It would not block the view for residents or the public to any significant degree, less so than for many other existing superstructures.

The proposed platform and jetty with aquarium are also considered acceptable.

The shed, it is considered, would have caused detriment to the appearance of the riverbank and set a highly undesirable precedent for structures on the south side of the bank. The applicant has, as requested, deleted it from the application although may re-apply at a later date.

Use as 2 residential units

The use of the houseboat as 2 'flats' is a further aspect to be considered which has not previously arisen and is not dealt with in the Code of Practice. However, as it does not involve any additional houseboat or building work affecting its external appearance (other than a second door in the superstructure), it is not considered that there is a planning objection. The housing policies encourage provision of smaller dwelling units.

The intensified use, however, as stated by the EHO, is considered to justify a requirement for connection to the public sewer.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason:-

The proposed development would not cause additional detraction from the riverscene, harm to the Adur Estuary SSSI or the 'strategic gap' separating built-up areas, or detriment to residential amenities of existing dwellings. It would not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AC1, AC4, AN1, AB16) and the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (LOC2, CH1, CH3, ERA2-3, DEV1).

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C14A3 (Permission relates to application as amended, deleting proposed shed on south side of riverbank) (amended)
3. C12Eii (External finish of superstructure to be submitted and approved) (amended)
4. There shall be no occupation of the houseboat as 2 residential units unless and until the houseboat has been connected to the public sewer.

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