Expiry Date - 21-12-2015

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: **Recommendation – APPROVE**
AWDM/1552/15

Site: **12 Queens Place Shoreham-By-Sea West Sussex**

Proposal: **Rear dormer**

Neighbours checked: Y
Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The proposal is for a flat roof rear dormer to measure (at max) 2.1 metres in height, 3 metres in length, and 4.6 metres in width.

The application property is mid terrace dwellinghouse, two-storey with a basement. There is an existing conservatory at the rear. Pedestrian access exists to the rear.

The site is situated in an inner residential neighbourhood of Shoreham, within the Shoreham Conservation Area (Character Area Residential Areas (north)).

Relevant Planning History

None

Consultations (summarised)

Southern Water: *No objection, add informative*

Representations (summarised)

Objections received from occupiers of 16 Ravens Road and Nos. 11, 12 and 14 Queens Place: *Overlooks our back garden. Loss of privacy will be increased. Will be able to look directly into our garden and back of property. We have glass doors along the whole back of our property. Cannot support – or even accept – the proposal. Dominant, ugly construction completely out of character with hitherto small, 150 year old terraced cottages in Queens Place. It is, after all, a Conservation Area. No 12 already has 3 storey (plus added conservatory) and stands, along with No. 11, higher than any other building in street. Proposed dormer – as well as most of the ones that have already somehow been approved – appears to be a very basic, dark, up-and-over construction which will overlook all of the small neighbouring rear gardens, including ours at No. 14. Properties are small and our loss of privacy would be most unwelcome. Fortunately my home is not immediately adjacent to where modification would be carried out, but note, with dismay, that one or two dormers built since area designated for conservation! Understand objections to similar development at No. 7 were not raised in time. I happen to know that (As member of Queens Place Residents Association) the disruption and damage incurred by neighbours to fragile fabric of these delightful traditional properties*

was considerable – verging on the unbearable! Owners now deeply regret not having opposed the development. Objecting strongly to the spread of these constructions along Queens Place. If property at No. 12 were extended as proposed, it is more likely that number of adult occupants – with cars – will increase, putting even greater pressure on parking situation As part of a simpler loft conversion, a simple velux window, or a narrow dormer could be compromise. Would it be possible to meet you in person. Been to look at the dormer of No. 7 Queens Place (Adjacent to a similar but somewhat older structure on no. 8). Told the proposal for No. 12 is much the same as that on no.7. My response, after careful look – is that they are intolerably out of keeping with the shape and design of these terraced homes. They loom disproportionately large on the buildings, distorting their appearance, and presenting aggressive angles, top-heavy weighting of the roof-lines and far too much black/dark grey colouring to the line of sight. (I have enquired, without obtaining a good answer, why the dormer has to be so relentlessly black-clad rather than surface that could be painted the same colour as the house wall). The terraced houses are narrow and not very tall, and such large dormers on their roofs radically distorts their design. I have envisaged what such a structure would be like in my more immediate vicinity, and know that it would be overbearing and intimidating. As regards the classification of Queens Place as part of a Conservation Area, I am aware how non-specifically and flexibly this definition is applied, but if classification is to be worth anything at all, those who apply it must surely give some thought to character of the buildings/homes in that area. Since eighteenth century, the admired design virtue of terraced housing is that it allows individual private dwellings to partake of the greater aesthetic scope of street or community development. Queens Place, to be sure, is relatively relaxed and low-key, as terraces go, and allows certain sorts of individual variation. But it is not logically possible to ignore backs completely whilst allowing the homes to be part of Conservation Area. Would be detrimental to 'conserved' character of street. Fact that some dormers previously allowed does not justify further encroachments. I have to say that I have been somewhat surprised by the lack of detail and individual quality in the plans. It really does look like a generic, 'one-loft-conversion-fits-all' type of proposal. Surprised, too, that your office is prepared to accept such faint and low-quality planning designs when I know that in the past, anyone submitting a planning application to the same office had first to organize (and pay for) proper architect's drawings. I am familiar with the impact of other councils, such as Hackney and Haringey in London, where inappropriate and intrusive additions to houses are evidently allowed on a regular basis, and have been the havoc that this has wrought on streets which had been reasonably harmonious. I would hope that Adur and Worthing Councils would be more careful about preserving the quality and character of our area's streets, and give some greater priority to the welfare of the communal environment. I submit these objections in full awareness of the implacability and bureaucratic nature of planning regulations, but with full confidence in the justice of my observations, and in sure and certain knowledge of my own feelings on the matter.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance
National Planning Policy Framework
Saved Adur Local Plan policies: AG1, AB4, AH7

Planning Assessment

Principle

Upgrading of residential accommodation is acceptable in principle, subject to satisfying the statutory test for new development in a Conservation Area.

Visual amenity and Heritage Assets

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how Government policies are applied when determining applications involving designated Heritage Asserts (Conservation Areas included).

Account should be taken of the desirability for sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and the desirability of new development to make a positive contribution to character and distinctiveness (para. 131). This reflects the statutory test set out in primary legislation.

Paragraph 133 states "*where a proposed development will lead to* ***substantial*** *harm to or* ***total loss of significance*** *of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent"*

The test is whether the current proposal is treated as either substantial harm or less than substantial harm, taking account of the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.

Paragraph 132 states when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset*, "****the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be****"*. More importantly still, paragraph 138 recognises that ***"not all elements of a … Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance****."*

It is noteworthy that the framework excludes Conservation Areas as a heritage asset of the highest significance.

Shoreham Conservation Area covers a wide area (29 hectares). The Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance Appraisal for the Conservation Area openly acknowledges the area's varying character within its boundaries, and that certain areas have more conservation value than others; it is the Historic Core that contributes most to its significance.

In the appraisal Queens Place falls within the character area named "*Residential Areas North of the Historic Core" (Southdown Road, Mill Lane, Queens Place, Ham Road)*. In comparison to the Historic Core, this character area makes only a marginal contribution to conservation significance (it is separated from the main core of the conservation area by the railway line). The appraisal text refers to its value being principally derived from its original street layout and plot form (*a "mix of terraced houses on small plots and larger semidetached and detached houses on larger plots")* front garden walls and street trees.

Moreover, the back of the properties along Queens Place are mostly hidden from public view, reducing the public perception of the conservation value of this street further still (No. 12 is concealed behind 14 & 16 Raven's Road).

Given this circumstance and limited conservation value of the rear of the properties along this street afforded by the Council's appraisal, the proposed dormer would have only a marginal impact on the special qualities of the Conservation Area as a whole – hence its established character and appearance would be preserved. The statutory test would therefore be satisfied.

Turning to the more general visual impact of the dormer, it is recognized it is of a large size. However its scale and external parameters are directly comparable to the rear dormer approved at No. 7 Queens Place in July 2014 (Planning permission AWDM/0800/14 refers). There are only four properties between No. 12 and No. 7, and the dormer at No. 7 is in easy view of the rear garden of No. 12. This recent approval was considered under an identical planning policy regime to the current scheme and found to be favourable. The permission is a material planning consideration, and it has set a precedent for directly comparable dormers at the rear of properties in this street. Additionally No. 8, the adjoining building to No. 7, exhibits a dormer of comparable size, scale, and design to the current proposal (the fact that it is historic less relevant than the fact that it exists so cannot be ignored). It would be very difficult indeed to now justifiably argue that a further dormer that is directly comparable to those at Nos. 7 and 8 could be out of keeping - those existing dormers have now set an established pattern for built form in the shape and scale of dormers at the rear of properties along Queen's Place (at least in the immediate building row).

In setting out this position, it is important to note that all these properties are mid terrace. The argument would not apply equally to the end of terrace properties, where the rears of properties are more visible from public viewpoint - and therefore the impact on the Conservation Area would be more marked.

The dormer fenestration matches that of the main house, which is more elegant that the casement windows approved at No. 7. The window design also helps break up the visual mass of the dormer. The bottom edge of the dormer is set off from the eaves to retain these. The suggested hanging tile exterior would help assimilate the dormer into the same tone as the existing roof; it would appear more obtrusive still if it were finished to match the wall as suggested by the one of the objectors.

Given this circumstance, the proposal would not conflict with the saved policies of the Adur Local Plan in so far as these relate to design and visual impact and impact upon Heritage Assets.

Residential amenity

The neighbours principally impacted upon by this development are those either side and at the rear (it is physically removed from the remainder).

There is substantial separation distance between the dormer and the neighbouring rear buildings, so avoiding adverse overbearing and overshadowing.

The dormer would be situated above eaves height and neither neighbouring building to each side exhibits roof lights in their respective rear roof slopes. Consequently, adverse overbearing and overshadowing would not result.

Gardens and habitable space of these neighbours already experience mutual overlooking from the first floor windows of the application property, so the severity of overlooking would be made no worse than at present - intrusive and unacceptable loss of privacy would not result.

Recommendation

APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Standard time limit
2. Approved plans
3. Exterior materials to match colour of roof tiles
4. Notwithstanding “pd” no windows/openings in side elevations

Informative

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Is recommendation contrary to any representations? Y

Case Officer signed: Matthew Porter Date: 17-12-2015

Authorised and signed by: Peter Barnett Date: 18 December 2015