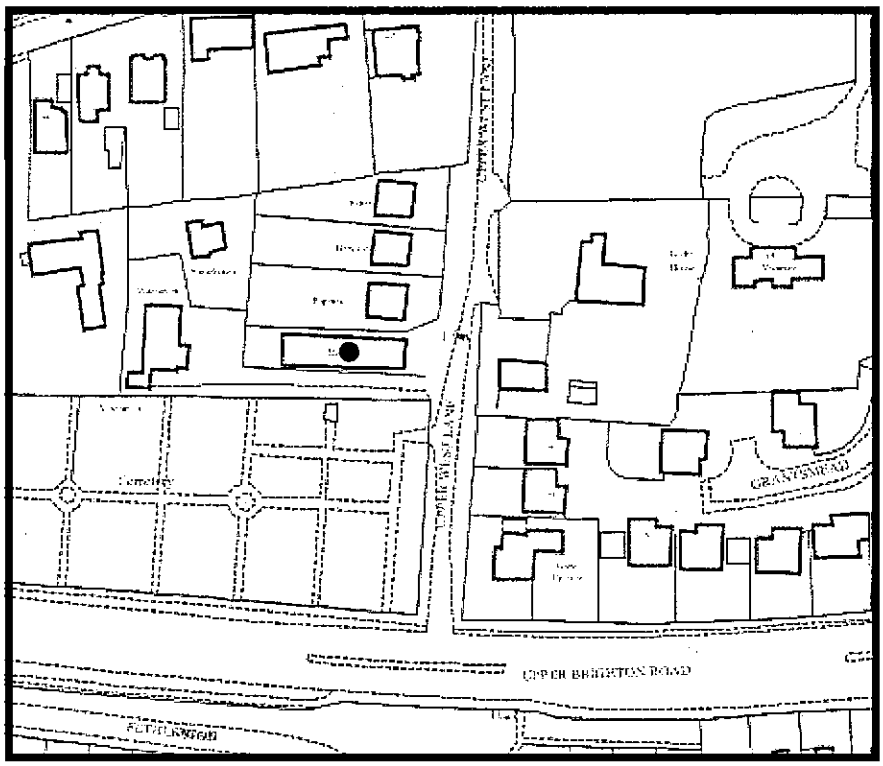
Application Number: ADC/0042/09 Recommendation - APPROVE

Site: **Former Womens Institute Hall, Upper West Lane Lancing BN15 0EX**

Proposal: **Partial demolition and conversion of existing hall into 2 two-bedroom cottages (with raised roof and south side dormers) with 2 parking spaces at front**



Revisions following the Deferral at the last Committee meeting

This application was deferred at the previous Committee meeting on 30 March. Clarification was sought by Members over the extent of the applicant's land ownership and confirmation that the proposed parking arrangement was usable.

The plans as previously considered showed the provision of 2 parking spaces at the front of the site, parallel to the lane. The red line of the application was shown as including these spaces but leaving the strip of land between the parking spaces and the lane outside the application site boundary. There was concern that these 2 parking spaces would not able to be accessed easily or that no right of access existed across this intervening strip thereby risking parking on the narrow, unmade lane.

The applicant's agent has since submitted a revised plan with 3 car spaces and has confirmed that the strip of land in front of the site is not part of the application property and not owned by the applicant. This strip contains grass and shrubs and an unmade footpath. However, the agent has confirmed that the existing hall was granted a right of access

across the land in 1955 and that there is a requirement for it to be maintained and hardsurfaced which was never carried out.

The current proposal is to resurface the entire frontage, including the parking spaces, with reinforced mesh through which grass will be able to grow, giving a green appearance. The existing porch is to be retained and 3 parking spaces (each 2.5m by 5m) provided in front of the building. A new block- paved footpath is shown running along the northern boundary and in front of the building between the porch and the parking spaces to enable pedestrian access to the proposed dwellings. An alternative proposal was submitted showing the removal of the porch which would have enabled more landscaping to be provided but which would have resulted in bin storage being more prominent at the front of the site and, together with the loss of the porch feature and the resulting rather plain end elevation, would have had a less pleasing appearance in the Conservation Area.

The Application

The application relates to a vacant single-storey ridge-roofed brick building built in 1950 as a meeting hall for the Women's Institute. It is located on the western side of Upper West Lane, north of the cemetery and 50m north of the A27T.
To the north of the site is a row of three detached bungalows. Directly to the south is a private driveway leading to two bungalows at the rear. Opposite the site, on the eastern side of the lane, lies Glebe House, while further south are the rear of houses in Grantsmead.

The existing building is 27m long (excluding the gabled front porch) and 6.7m wide. It sits on a plot 9.5m wide and 41m long. It has a gabled front porch and a flat-roofed rear extension. There are a number of window and door openings on both the northern and southern sides of the building.

The application proposes to demolish the flat-roofed rear section and to convert the remainder of the building into 2 two-bedroom dwellings of 105sqm floor area each, with their entrance doors in the south side elevation served by an existing pathway running along the southern boundary of the site. The existing front porch was originally proposed to be demolished but amended plans were received retaining it for re-use as a bin and general storage area. 3 parking spaces would now be provided at the front.

In order to provide accommodation within the roofspace, the roof height is to be raised by 0.75m with four gabled dormers provided within the southern roof slope. Two rooflights are proposed for the northern roofslope.

The area at the rear of the building (enlarged as a result of demolition of the flat roofed extension) would be subdivided into two halves to provide each dwelling with its own rear garden. The garden for the front dwelling would be at the rearmost part of the plot, 18m away. A cycle store shed is shown in each garden.

Consultations and Representations

West Sussex County Council: The Transport Planning Officer has no highway objections. The most recently-available verified accident records reveal there have been no personal injury accidents in the vicinity of the existing junctions onto the A27 or Manor Road, indicating a low risk of highway safety issues. The development is modest in nature and is unlikely to intensify the use of Upper West Lane to the point where a significant

WSCC Agreed to remove this legit by email 21/4/09

highway safety issue would be raised. A sustainable transport contribution of £2,240 is required.

Adur District Council: The Assistant Parks Manager has confirmed that there only viable tree is the large sycamore on the southern boundary; the other trees are dead elms. None of the trees is on the inside of the boundary fencing. The Environmental Health Officer has no objections to the revised layout.

Lancing Parish Council: Support this application as it improves the site and brings the building into use by creating 2 dwellings.

Adur District Conservation Advisory Group: No objection

Third Parties: 8 letters of objection/concern have been received from the residents of Glebe House, Poppy's, Faber, Greytiles and Rose Cottage, Upper West Lane, plus No.3 Grantsmead, No.8 Church Close and one unidentified address. They raise the following:-

- The building is an important community asset and should be retained;
- it should be converted to one dwelling not two;
- the lane is unmade and in a very poor pot-holed condition and could worsen as a result of construction traffic – it needs to be surfaced to Council standards;
- Inadequate parking; 5 car spaces, not 2, should be provided (as average car ownership per household in the last census was 2.31 cars per household); cars parked in the lane would block it;
- Increased traffic;
- Construction vehicles will block the lane;
- the lane should be made one way as it is unsafe to enter lane from the A27 and exit onto Manor Road;
- the lane has no drainage provision; the level of the site needs to be lowered to prevent run-off onto the lane and soakaways provided;
- street lighting needs to be provided on this southern half of the lane;
- Access path along the south side of the site is too narrow and unsuitable for wheelchair users
- Loss of light caused by raised roof height;
- Overlooking; restrict dormer window size to minimise overlooking;
- Impact on Conservation Area;
- Out of keeping;
- Materials should match other buildings in the lane (using Cornish slates for the roof, not darker Welsh slates); the existing walls match no others in the lane;
- East elevation (on original plans) has no windows and looks like a shed;
- Loss of trees (outside of boundary fence); the dead elms should be removed and burnt to the Council's standard; the other trees, laurel hedging and shrubs are flourishing and should not be removed or trimmed;
- Disturbance during construction; work should not be done at weekends;
- Asbestos on the existing roof; a correct asbestos survey needs to be done and all interior and exterior asbestos removed by a licensed specialist contractor;
- the Church sold the land in 1931 on the understanding it would be only for a single-storey community building, not for dwellings.

[NB. the occupiers of Glebe House and Rose Cottage requested to speak at the Committee meeting]

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, NE1, NE11, CH4, ERA1, DEV1, DEV4-5
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993–2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AP4, AB4, AH2, 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)
PPG13 'Transport' (DLTR 2001)
PPG15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (DoE 1994)

Planning Assessment

Policies

The site is located within North Lancing Conservation Area. There is a statutory duty to pay special attention to the need to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas (as reflected in policies AB4 and CH4).

Local Plan policy ACS5 states that development involving the loss of an existing community facility will not be permitted. NE11 aims to improve community facilities and prevent the loss of important recreational resources and facilities of value to local communities.

The site is not identified for any particular use or development in the Local Plan and is in a locality where development for residential purposes accords with both Structure and Local Plan policies. In order to meet the housing requirements of the Structure Plan, it is necessary that a significant proportion of new residential development takes place by way of unidentified sites and
the above policies encourage redevelopment, infilling and conversion to help meet the demand for dwellinghouses suitable for small families, single persons, the elderly, and to make best use of urban land.

Policy DEV1, entitled high quality development, states that development should not be permitted unless its construction, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are of high quality taking into account the need to, amongst other things, integrate with and where possible enhance adjoining land uses and minimise conflicts between land uses and activities; have regard to context including site characteristics, townscape/streetscape views into and out of the site and building styles/materials; give high priority to pedestrians and reduce dominance of cars; create a high quality socially-inclusive adaptable environment; protect and enhance biodiversity; ensure energy efficiency; and meet the needs of service providers.

Policy DEV4 states (amongst other things) that development should not be permitted unless the travel needs it generates are met; it achieves safe and convenient access by choice of means of travel; it encourages and enables an increase in walking and cycling; and the number and impact of motorised journeys is minimised. 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.

The relevant Local Plan policy AH2, related to housing development by way of infilling and redevelopment, expects development to be designed so that its appearance, character and scale create a pleasant place in which to live, is in keeping with and enhances the existing local environment with particular attention to the architectural form, height, materials, density and layout; respect for the natural features of the site, including trees, no unneighbourly effect on existing dwellings by loss of privacy, light, outlook or open amenity space; adequate access and parking arrangements and accordance with adopted standards (in this case the Council's DC Standard No. 2 'Space Around New Dwellings and Flats' 1996.)

Government policy in PPS3, in order to achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, improve affordability and create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities, generally encourages the maximisation of the use of previously developed land for housing development at higher densities (avoiding developments at less than 30 dwellings per hectare) and without rigid application of parking and amenity space standards. However, it is also states that "Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted" (para 13).
It states "Careful attention to design is particularly important where the chosen local strategy involves intensification of the existing urban fabric. More intensive development is not always appropriate. However, when well designed and built in the right location, it can enhance the character and quality of an area. Successful intensification need not mean high rise development or low quality accommodation.
Similarly, in Conservation Areas and other local areas of special character where, if proper attention is paid to achieving good design, new development opportunities can be taken without adverse impacts on their character and appearance" (para 49). "The density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment" (para 50).

Principle of development

The lawful use of the site as a meeting hall represents a community facility covered by policy ACS5 of the Local Plan. Although this policy states that the loss of such facilities will not be permitted, there is no evidence, as in other recent cases, to show that there is any viable alternative community use available. The applicant's agent has submitted a letter stating that the applicant has owned the building for two months and has been unable to find a tenant. The previous owners were the Women's Institute and they owned and used the building for many years before selling it due to the failure to let it over a long period.

While the applicant has only owned the site for a relatively short period, it would appear that there has been a long term lack of interest in re-using the building for community purposes. Moreover, the building is not well-located for such purposes, being on an unadopted road off the A27, where the attraction of significant amounts of traffic is undesirable. It is therefore considered that an exception to policy ACS5 can be made.

Density, character and appearance

The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character made up mainly of bungalows, some with rooms in the roof, but also with houses on the eastern side of the lane. The proposed conversion would largely respect this character, having a single-storey eaves line and rooms in the roof served by dormers and rooflights, albeit with the ridge height increased to 6.1m. In terms of density, the proposal equates to 50 dwellings per hectare which is substantially higher than the adjoining bungalows (20dph) and other properties in this low density area.

The WI building is not of any architectural or historic merit but it is considered desirable to retain and adapt it if possible. Owing to its length, which is too large for a single dwelling, it is proposed to convert it to one dwelling in the front half and one in the rear half. This is not an ideal arrangement but compromises often have to be made in the case of conversions. The removal of the flat-roofed rear extension will increase the open area at the rear and enhance the appearance of the building. The retention of the porch on the eastern (front) elevation helps to maintain visual interest form the lane. The walls of the building will have flint panels added below the windows on the southern elevation, with tile hanging added to the raised gable ends and natural slate on the new roof to replace the existing corrugated asbestos cement material.

It is considered that the proposal will retain the general character of the original building but improve the quality of its appearance, thereby also enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Residential amenity

The proposal is not considered to have a harmful impact on the existing surrounding residential properties in Upper West Lane or Grantsmead. To the north, the adjacent bungalow, Poppy's, would not be directly overlooked, with two rooflights serving a landing area only. These can be required to be obscure glazed and permanently fixed shut by planning condition. The increase in roof height is not considered to result in any significant light loss to Poppies, with the pitch of the roof slightly steeper but the eaves lowered by 0.5m. Sufficient light will still be able to reach the property to the north.

At the rear, the demolition of the rear extension will increase the separation distance of the building from the bungalow Vinehaven directly to the west to in excess of 25m, which exceeds the Council's DC Standard minimum distance of 22m. The only rear windows proposed in the rear elevation are groundfloor patio doors. It is not considered that the proposal would result in any loss of amenity to the properties to the rear.

The occupier of No.3 Grantsmead is concerned at the potential for overlooking. However, the rear of that house is at an oblique angle to the site and over 30m from the proposed south side dormer windows, comfortably in excess of the 22m standard.

The proposed dwellings will have bin storage within the front 'porch' which will also be available as a store for both units. The porch will be closed off internally to prevent access to unit 1.

In terms of the residential amenities of the proposed dwellings, they will each have internal floor areas of approximately 90sqm which is sufficient for two-bedroom units. Outlook from living room/dining room windows would be limited, especially for the front unit which only

has south and north-facing windows close to the site boundaries, but is not considered so poor as to warrant refusal. The view south would be towards the cemetery, over the boundary fence/hedge and adjoining access drive.

The garden area for the units is 63sqm for unit 1 and 53sqm for unit 2. This meets the Council's minimum standard of 50sqm for two-bedroom terraced dwellings (NB. there is no standard for two-bed semi-detached dwellings). The depth of the gardens is 7m, with the garden for unit 1 set behind the garden for unit 2. Although below the usual 11m standard, this is considered acceptable for these small dwellings.

The 'detached' nature of the rear garden for the front dwelling is a disadvantage but, in the absence of any alternative other than by omitting the front parking spaces and using the space instead as a garden, there is no more satisfactory arrangement feasible.

Access and parking

The site is served by an unmetalled unadopted access lane which runs between Manor Road to the north and the A27 to the south. It is in poor condition and has a very uneven surface and edge. Local residents have expressed concern that exiting onto Manor Road is 'blind' and that access to and from the A27 is dangerous. However, the local highway authority, taking account of the previous use of the building as a community hall, has not objected to the application, stating that the development is modest in nature and unlikely to lead to additional traffic using Upper West Lane. For this reason, it would be unreasonable to require the applicant to surface Upper West Lane or provide streetlighting.

The revised parking provision of 1.5 spaces per unit is within the West Sussex adopted maximum standard of 2 spaces per dwelling. The provision comprises one space per unit plus an additional space for visitors. There is no on-site parking for the building at present.

The amended parking arrangements are described at the start of this report and are considered to be acceptable. The front parking spaces and access area in front, between the spaces and the lane, are stated to be reinforced mesh set within grass, which will provide a porous surface.

Cycle storage is to be provided by way of sheds within each rear garden.

The main pedestrian access for both units (with their front doors in the south side elevation) is to be via the path alongside the southern boundary. Queries have been raised with regard to the narrowness of this access path and its unsuitability for wheelchair users. The path is only approximately 1m wide and runs along the gap between the side of the building and the boundary fence and hedge. The Building Regulations do not require residential units that have been created through conversion (unlike new purpose-built units) to have disabled access. The reason is because, in some cases it may be impractical (as in the present instance). While unfortunate, this is not a reason to refuse planning permission.

Under the adopted Transport Contributions Methodology, a section 106 Obligation requiring a contribution of £2,240 towards sustainable transport improvements is needed.

Trees and Landscaping

There is not much space around the building for new planting, although the increased rear garden area will provide additional open space. The application drawings refer to there being several dead elm trees along the southern boundary which are to be removed with other shrubs forming a boundary hedge pruned back and re-shaped.
The Council's Assistant Parks Manager has confirmed that there is only one tree of note at the site which is the large sycamore on the southern boundary. This is very close to the side of the building. However, none of the dead trees are on the inside of the southern boundary fencing and may not therefore be within the applicant's ownership. It is recommended to impose a landscaping condition including details of any works to the existing sycamore tree and shrubs.

Other matters

The existing building is on mains drainage and surface water drainage is unchanged. There is limited space within the site for the storage of contractor's vehicles and materials while the works are ongoing. Any obstruction of the lane is essentially a private matter as it is not a public highway but it would be sensible to impose a condition requiring the submission of details of temporary parking and unloading areas.

Recommendation

~~Subject to completion of Section 106 Obligation requiring payment of £2,240 to sustainable transport improvements in the area,~~ APPROVE for reason that:-

The proposed development is within the built-up area and would help meet the need for additional housing without detracting from existing local urban environment. It can take place without resulting in unacceptable detriment to the residential amenities of nearby properties and without detraction from highway safety. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AG3, AB25-27, AH2, AH5) and the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (LOC1, NE1, CH1, ERA1, DEV1, DEV3-5)

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C7Cii (Details of walls/fences to be approved and implemented)
3. C8Biv (Car parking spaces and associated access area plus cycle sheds to be constructed and retained) (amended)
4. C9N (Temporary provision for contractors' vehicles, materials, etc on the site)
5. C11Ai (Landscaping scheme including works to existing sycamore tree and shrubs to be approved and implemented and replacement of trees & shrubs that die)
6. C12Aii (External materials to be approved, including natural slates for roof) (amended)
7. C14Aii (Permission relates to amended plans received on 23 March & 15 April 2009) (amended)
8. C18B (Removal of 'permitted development rights' for extensions and curtilage buildings over 5 cubic metres) (amended)
9. C18C3 (Obscure glazing and fixing shut of north rooflights) (amended)
10. C18E3 (No additional windows to be constructed in western end wall or north roof slope without permission)

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