Expires 2/12/08.

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: ADC/0479/08 **Recommendation – Refuse Application**

Site: **Western Lodge Western Road Shoreham-by-Sea West Sussex**

Proposal: **Change of use from office to residential to form two-bedroom house**

The Application

The application site is a two-storey office building annexed onto the east side of Western Lodge, Western Road, Shoreham. The building has recently been extended to include a first floor level (SU/6/02/TP) and pitched roof and has north/front facing windows only. It sits recessed back from the main frontage to Western Lodge and borders the Lloyds TSB bank to the east with the goods yard and outbuildings attached to the main post office directly to the rear. To the front is a hardstanding capable of accommodating two vehicles.

Permission is sought to convert the building from use as offices to a two-bedroom dwelling. No external alterations are proposed however internally the ground floor will consist of the main open plan lounge/kitchen with two small bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor accessed via a rear staircase. The existing openings that connect the building directly with Western Lodge are to be filled in.

Consultations and Representations

Consultations/Comments

Chief Environmental Health Officer	No objection.
Spencer Bryan (County Planning Officer Strategic)	No objection. There should be little intensification of vehicular traffic and therefore no significant highway safety concerns are raised. No TAD is required.

Third Parties

No representations have been received.

Contributors

ADCAG raise no objection.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, CH1, CH4, DEV1, DEV4-5
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AS1, AH2, AH9 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising: Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions'
Revised West Sussex Parking Standards and Transport Contributions Methodology (WSCC 2003 and ADC 2004)
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005)
PPS3 'Housing' (DCLG 2006)
PPG24 'Planning and Noise' (DoE 1994)

Planning Assessment

Policies
The Structure Plan gives significant weight to making the best use of land through higher density residential 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 CH4 requires that development should not be permitted unless Conservation Areas will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced. Policy NE1 requires the provision of new residential developments of sizes, types and tenures to suit the varied needs of local households and to minimise the need to develop greenfield sites. 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". The explanatory text refers to a transport contributions methodology (now adopted as TAD payments to sustainable transport improvements).

Policy AH9 of the Local Plan, although relating to the conversion of dwellinghouses rather than other buildings into flats, is of some relevance. It refers to the needs for: access and car parking provision to be acceptable; for there not to be an unacceptable adverse effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking or noise transmission through party walls; and for the standard of accommodation to be provided accord with adopted standards. Similarly, while not covered in Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions', the principles within that document can be applied here. It states, among other criteria, that any conversion should be capable of

producing self-contained flats of adequate total size and with individual rooms of sufficient size, and satisfactory internal arrangement. Living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens should all have adequate natural light. It is also essential that at least the living room has a reasonable outlook. Flats in which all windows are north facing should be avoided as direct sunlight in rooms would be limited.

Although government policy guidance in PPS3 gives no specific guidance on flat conversions except for the general statement that "conversions of existing housing can provide an important source of new housing" (para 31), it encourages the best use of urban land for housing development, particularly affordable housing and a mixture of types to create a balanced community, at higher densities (avoiding developments at less than 30 dwellings per hectare) and without rigid application of parking and amenity space standards. The density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring a replication of existing style of 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."

Visual Amenity
The proposal does not include any external alterations to the building or the surrounding site in general and will thus not impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Residential Amenity- for resident(s) of the proposed dwelling
The principle concern is the standard of living that the proposed dwelling will afford to potential occupiers. Although there are no specific policies in the local plan regarding conversions of buildings to single houses policy AH9 and DC standard No.4 'Flat Conversions' do require new flats to have an adequate total size with individual rooms of sufficient size and an acceptable outlook, and can be used as a basis for comparison in this context.
Internally, the total floor area of the building is 55 square metres (less than the 57 sqm minimum recommended for a 2-bed flat under DC standard No.4) whilst the two bedrooms have a floor area of 7.8sqm each (the DC standard recommends single bedrooms to have a floor area of 6.5sqm and double rooms 11sqm). The useable open-plan lounge/kitchen area on the ground floor is calculated to be 22.1sqm which is marginally above the combined DC standard minimum of 19.5sqm.
In terms of outlook and light, the only windows will be those currently sited on the northern (front) elevation. As the property sits in a recess between the Bank to the east and the main building of Western Lodge to the west the outlook will thus be somewhat restricted and north facing only towards a main road. There will thus be no direct sunlight penetrating the building whilst the staircase and bathroom to the rear will have minimal natural light and be near permanently in darkness. Given that all the rooms face north towards the main road the potential for constant noise disturbance from passing traffic will lower the standard of living further.
It is clear that the standard of living afforded by this proposal will be severely limited by virtue of the northerly aspect fronting a main road, the small size of

the building, and the lack of a decent sized master bedroom. It does not conform to the base requirements of policy AH9 and its attached DC standard, nor does it correspond to the requirements of PPS1 and PPS3 for new housing development that provides for a good sustainable standard of living.

The site is bounded to the east, south and west by adjoining buildings such that there is no private amenity space for the proposed dwelling. The DC standard No.2 'Space around New Dwellings and Flats' recommends that a two-bed house should have a private garden of approximately 85sqm. This is clearly unobtainable however no attempt has been made to provide any area whatsoever. It is though noted that an approved office conversion directly opposite (SU/132/01/TP, with a new building also approved to the rear comprising flats and maisonettes- SI/111/04/TP) offered no amenity space to the majority of units. This was considered acceptable given the town centre location and the fact that the units were all flats. In this instance, the proposal has the nature of a flat conversion but in the form of a house. It is thus considered on balance that the lack of private amenity space within this town centre location is not sufficient to warrant refusal in itself.

Access and Parking

The hardstanding to the front of the site currently supplies parking provision for the offices at Western Lodge. The plans show that this will be allocated to the proposed dwelling and will afford space for two vehicles. This is a more than acceptable level of parking provision given the size of dwelling proposed and its location within a town centre site close to public transport connections. County highways have raised no objection and do not require a TAD contribution under the Revised West Sussex Parking Standards and Transport Contributions Methodology. It is unclear how the transfer of the parking bays to the proposed dwelling will impact on the provision for remaining offices at Western Lodge however it is noted that there is an element of street parking to the front and good local transport connections that should minimise this concern.

Other Matters

The proposal does not indicate where bin storage facilities will be sited in relation to the building and hardstanding.

Although the site is located on the edge of an allocated town centre shopping area it is not considered that the conversion of this annex building will be detrimental to the vitality of the area. The annex is currently attached to further main office buildings within Western Lodge which are to remain whilst Western Road is in the main a residential street. The conversion of offices opposite under SU/132/01/TP was approved under this premise.

Recommendation

REFUSE on ground that :-

Having regard to the limited size and type of building involved, its conversion into a single dwellinghouse would give rise to an over-intensive use of the site with an unsatisfactory standard of residential amenity for the occupiers & living conditions, ~~and would therefore be detrimental to the residential environment of the locality,~~ contrary to the policies of the WSSP ([redacted], DEV1) and ADLP ([redacted], AH9).

Case Officer:.....

Date: 17/11/08

PB 18/11/08