

Walberswick Parish Council response to DC/26/2003/FUL Renovation of dwelling. Remove existing pitched roof. Add new pitched room in roof. Erection of 2 bay cart lodge. Herons Church Field Walberswick Southwold Suffolk IP18 6TG

1. Opinion

Walberswick Parish Council (WPC) **objects** to the above proposal on the basis of the points summarised in section 4 below.

2. Description

The proposal seeks to renovate an existing three-bedroom bungalow known as 'Herons', using the existing 2 bay garage and change of pitch to enlarge it to a five-bedroom, 1.5 storey, property. The additional accommodation within the roof space relies on an extensive expanse of glazing to the north elevation and five large dormers to the south.

Additionally, the application proposes a new cart lodge/garage with a further room in the attic space. The scheme uses existing drive and parking area to replace the 2 bays of parking lost from the existing footprint to accomodation.

Herons occupies a plot on Church Field, an unadopted road, where modest houses sit in large gardens. Its immediate neighbours are Brackenside, Commonside and Shearwater. The application references Commonside which has recently undergone a scheme of demolition and rebuild to two storeys, whilst Brackenside and Shearwater remain largely unaltered and are set centrally in large plots.

Shearwater is built in buff brick and two storey sitting at a lower ground level to Herons. Brackenside is a cedar clad bungalow. Herons is a 1960s bungalow by Colt & Sons; a Kent based company who pioneered the design and supply of prefabricated buildings. Typically, the walls and roof of a Colt house were clad in Cedar, however Herons is clad in buff brick. Coupled with simple forms and detailing, this ensured such buildings were unpretentious. Herons is one of a cluster of five houses by Colt. Herons has a low-lying form which is particularly suited to its sensitive site, which forms a backdrop to the Common. Several of the houses on Church Field are also single storey with large gardens and this creates an open and spacious quality that is particularly evident around Herons and the properties to the West and South. Hedges and trees make a positive contribution to the quiet rural character of the lane.

3. Comment

3.1 Impact

Although Herons lies outside the Conservation Area, the provisions of Section 8 of the Conservation Area Appraisal (Countryside Setting) are relevant. Section 8 refers to the visibility of the perimeter of the village and the importance of taking this into account 'when considering any planning application which might affect views from outside the village' (pages16 - 18 of the Appraisal).

As stated the accommodation of this proposal sits within the existing footprint with the addition of the cart lodge/new garage to the south-east. It therefore retains the same relation to the public footpath / track and Common as the existing bungalow. However, the additional half storey does increase ridge height and therefore would have an increased visual impact on those using these public spaces as well as neighbouring residences.

The visuals provided in the application do not demonstrate adequately the proposals impact from either Church Field, neighbouring properties or the public footpath.

The stock of village bungalows and reasonably sized properties is being eroded, forcing long-standing residents or those with specific needs to move out of the village. The Parish Plan recorded the widely expressed housing need for small and affordable dwellings of 2 to 3 bedrooms such as the existing dwelling that this proposal seeks to enlarge.

The site is adjacent to the Minsmere Heaths and Marshes Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Minsmere – Walberswick Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Walberswick – Minsmere Ramsar site. This application lacks the accompanying reports necessary for accurate assessment of ecological and habitat impact. We therefore recommend that a Preliminary Ecological Impact Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment be carried out prior to determination.

Should the application be considered appropriate for approval by the local authority, a Lighting Plan should be conditioned prior to commencement on site or occupation to ensure appropriate lighting is installed to limit the impact on neighbouring dwellings, inhabitants, wildlife and the special sites identified above. The proposal includes low visual light transmittance glass to all windows and all first floor windows are to have blackout blinds on dusk sensor switch. Whilst WPC contends that these are insufficient mitigation, they should at least be reinforced through conditions should it be approved.

3.2 Design Quality

The proposed scheme enlarges the existing accommodation to 1.5 storey including 5 bedrooms and an office space. The form of the house and garage is retained but seeks to change the ridge and pitch of the roof to accommodate the additional half storey.

Whilst this proposal is presented as modest and WPC is commenting on this proposal only, it is difficult not to consider the two previous developments proposed and refused for this site recently by the same applicants as it is clearly intended to be perceived as a response and thus more modest. The ridge height of this 1.5 storey proposal in fact sits approximately 400mm higher than DC/25/3655/FUL a two-storey proposal. The glazing has increased compared to the same proposal from 20.5m² to 33.3m² to the south (overlooking Shearwater) and 33.6m² to 59m² towards the north (Common).

Whilst renovating within the footprint does retain the same distance to the footpath/common as the existing dwelling. The council does not feel that this is enough to mitigate the impact of such increase to height and glazing. The council therefore feels that the potential for overlooking neighbouring residential and wildlife habitat and 'beaconing' is unacceptable.

The additional cart lodge/new garage sits below the ridge height of the house and will include two bays for car parking and a gym facility set within the roof recess. This does bring the development closer to the neighbouring southern boundary with Shearwater and will increase the visual presence of the overall property on Church Field.

The scale of the proposed development significantly exceeds the area and volume of the existing bungalow; the amount of habitable space is more than doubled.

The proposal is poorly reflective of its immediate or wider context. It does not enhance the area, nor does it take account of the findings of the Parish Plan, which recorded the widely expressed need for small and affordable dwellings in the village to ensure its sustainability.

3.3 Materials

The 1.5 storey rectangular form with extensive glazing toward the north, and chosen materials of zinc standing seam roofing, project a harsh formality on the house which is at odds with the subtle character of its surroundings.

The choice of Suffolk red brick at ground floor level could be considered in keeping with the local vernacular as a whole, however not with its immediate setting as described in section 2.

The zinc roofing is a foreign material in this locality and is out of keeping with the surrounding pallet of materials. Unfortunately, the Design and Access Statement misrepresents the immediate adjacent material palette and instead draws from other areas of the village with different materiality than this location.

3.4 Amenity

The proposed north and south elevations show significant areas of glazing on the first floor, facing north towards the Common, and large dormers to the south and facing Shearwater which contravenes SLP11.2 Residential Amenity. As above this represents a significant increase which, from a greater height, greatly increases the impact on the neighbouring properties.

The potential for light pollution from the extensive glazing on the first floor is high particularly as these are the focus of the entertainment areas (The impact on the designated nature conservation sites from light spill is referenced above). The use of low visual light transmission glass is proposed for use to mitigate the impact however this material negatively impacts birdlife by increased risk of collisions. Even if it is conditioned, it is not considered sufficient to mitigate the impact on habitat.

4. Summary

A summary of the key points discussed above shows:

- The proposal conflicts with the Conservation Area Appraisal at Section 8, where the importance of the rural setting of the Conservation Area is outlined.
- There will be detrimental impacts on the character and potential enjoyment of the footpath adjacent to the site.
 - The stock of smaller dwellings, especially bungalows, is severely depleted in Walberswick due to the unchecked permissions given for large extensions or rebuilds. This is causing stresses within the housing market.
 - The Preliminary Ecological Assessment is lacking. An HRA should be undertaken before a decision can be made.
 - If considered for approval a Lighting Plan should be conditioned to mitigate potential impacts on wildlife and the special sites identified.
 - The size proposed, (more than double the existing), and increased height will result in detrimental visual impacts to neighbours and protected landscape.
 - The dominant roofscape is out of place in this low-key rural setting.
 - The materials for the roof and the large format windows are ill suited to this location.
- The proposal contravenes a number of the clauses of policies SCLP 11.1 (Design Quality) and SCLP 11.2 (Amenity).