

Planning Advisory Group: Report to Walberswick Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/20/1356/FUL

Demolition and Redevelopment of Commonsides, Palmers Lane IP18 TD

1 Opinion:

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group the application does not comply with the requirements of the Local Plan and should be refused.

2 Description

2.1 Commonsides is a large two storey house with a single storey wing built during the 1970's on the edge of the village north of Church Field. The house is understood to accommodate two dwellings. The plot adjoins Walberswick Common and is accessed from the track connecting Palmers Lane and Church Lane. West of Palmers Lane the area has an open and fragmented appearance with a scatter of single storey dwellings and generous spaces between. The track provides a well used pedestrian route leading to the centre of the village and to Southwold via Palmers Lane and the bailey bridge.

2.2 Although Commonsides lies outside the Conservation Area the provisions of Section 8 of the CA 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' (pages 16 - 18 of the Appraisal).

2.3 The proposal is to demolish the existing house, subdivide the plot and redevelop the site with two large 2 storey houses of four and five bedrooms. The houses are tightly spaced side by side between the east and west boundaries of the plot.

3 Comment

3.1 The close proximity of the houses to each other and to the neighbouring boundaries conflicts with the open character of the village edge referred to above.

Siting the houses across the full width of the plot will obstruct the visual continuity of the Common with the gardens behind and give a cramped, suburban quality to the development.

The suburban impression is reinforced by the extensive areas for garaging and parking provided in front of the houses (10 cars are to be accommodated according to question 9 of the application form).

The two storey form of the houses and the steeply pitched roofs will be obtrusive in this low key environment. The proposed north elevations front and rear have an alien scale and formality.

3.2 Overlooking

The new houses will be sited close to the boundaries of neighbouring properties, Windows at first floor on the north, south and west elevations will overlook the adjacent gardens to the detriment of their amenity.

3.3 Trees

It is not clear from the drawings which trees will be removed to make way for the development and which will be replaced in mitigation. This information is required.

3.4 Passivhaus

To claim Passivhaus status entails a complex regime of testing and certification. When referring to Passivhaus standards, the applicant should confirm that this is the intention.

3.5 Biodiversity and the impact on the SAC

The site adjoins Walberswick Common which is designated an SSSI and a Special Area of Conservation. The Common is an important habitat for adders, breeding nightingales and other protected species. This is not reflected in the response to question 12 of the application form: 'There are no important habitat or other biodiversity features on or adjacent to the site'. In considering the impact of the development on the SAC the pre-app planning officer advises that additional mitigation may be required in addition to the RAMSAR payments. The Ecological Appraisal does not adequately deal with this aspect of the Habitats Regulations.

3.6 Justification of need

The Design and Access Statement concludes with the assertion that the development will provide 'much needed' energy efficient accommodation in Walberswick. This takes no account of the findings of the Parish Plan which recorded the widely expressed housing need for small and affordable dwellings, not the large four and five bedroom dwellings proposed here.

4. Conclusion

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group, the application represents significant and detrimental overdevelopment of the site. It does not meet the conditions of policy DM7 permitting the subdivision of plots, It does not comply with the requirements of policy DM21 regarding the relationship of new proposals to the scale and character of their surroundings and it does not have regard for the privacy and amenity of adjoining properties as required by policy DM23.