

Planning Advisory Group: report to Walberswick Parish Council

DC/22/1776/FUL

“Single storey alterations and extensions to bungalow to improve accommodation”

Longwood, Church Field, Walberswick, Suffolk, IP18 6TG

05/06/2022

1. Opinion

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group this application would cause harm to the setting of the Grade I listed church and Conservation Area and should be **refused**.

2. Description

The application proposes a large single storey extension to a modest 1960s timber-built bungalow, designed and supplied by Colt & Sons, Kent. Church Field has a number of houses by Colt, which are understated in their form and material use.

The accommodation proposed will more than double the existing footprint of the house, providing living space, bedrooms, kitchen, entrance, entrance hall and bathrooms, all in addition to what is currently provided by the existing house. Essentially, the form and flow of the extended house reads as two elements, capable of independent use, linked by a study / gym.

The existing house will be clad using synthetic Hardiplank boards (replacing painted cedar boards) with areas of render proposed to the new accommodation. The roof is to be covered with a mix of synthetic tiles and zinc, with photovoltaic tiles to the ridge.

The south elevation is to be extended (towards the church) creating a large projecting bay, with the elevation re-fenestrated to incorporate significantly increased areas of glazing. The south roof pitch will have three rooflights, with a further three to the north and two to the west pitches.

In addition to the enlargement of the house, the drive is to be moved, with areas of parking, garaging and a garden store replacing an orchard and grass.

Church Field is a private road, generally comprising of modest houses sitting in large gardens. The landscape at Longwood abuts the Conservation Area and shares a direct and sensitive position to the north of the Grade I listed St Andrew's Church. The site lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

3. Comment

This property has been the subject of a number of planning applications in recent years, most recently an appeal which was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate (APP/X3540/W/21/3267603). While the appeal related to a proposal for two dwellings of two storeys, the comments made by the Planning Inspectorate are pertinent:

“...the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the setting of the Grade I listed building...and the Walberswick Conservation Area, and the landscape and natural beauty of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”.

“In particular, the modest form, scale and dark and recessive cladding of Longwood ensure it sits comfortably beyond the churchyard, so it is not a distraction”.

The appeal decision further sites the *“sensitive backdrop of the church and its ruins”*

The site at Longwood is highly sensitive, with the house and garden forming a backdrop to the Grade I listed Church and the Walberswick Conservation Area. The site is visible from the road into the village and the site can be seen from within the nave of the church.

The potential impact the proposal could have on its neighbours (the Church and also Half Acre) has not been addressed by the application. The Design & Access Statement comments: *“We do not believe the proposals will have an impact either on the setting of the listed building, the AONB or the neighbouring properties”.* No reference is made to impact on the Conservation Area, so it must be assumed this was not assessed. The Design & Access Statement provides no justification for the conclusion reached.

The proposals are considered to have a negative impact on the setting of the Grade I listed Church and the Conservation Area, for the reasons given below:

- The material palette of synthetic boarding, synthetic roof slates, PV tiles and rooflights is not appropriate for the setting, and is a significant departure from the natural timber boarding and timber roof shingles, as existing.
- The increased areas of glazing to the south elevation, and the living room bay extension, will erode the sense of privacy for those tending to graves along the southern boundary.
- The enlarged areas of glazing combined with a total of 8no rooflights will significantly increase light spillage within a particularly dark and quiet part of the village.
- The proposal lacks coherency and subtlety, and the extension challenges the existing house. The proposal relates poorly to its boundary and neighbours, and makes no attempt to follow the established forms evident to the north and west end of Church Field.
- Doubling the size of the house to the north of the site, a new drive entrance, garden store, double garage and parking represents over-development of the site and a cluttered aesthetic.

4. Planning Policy

The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (2020) should be taken into account when assessing this application. The following policies from the Plan have not been satisfied by the application, for the reasons stated below:

SCLP 5.7 Infill and Garden Development

- a) The scale, design and materials would not result in harm to the street scene or character of the area;
- b) The proposal is well related in scale and design to adjacent properties, including the design of curtilage areas, parking and access, and incorporates landscaping where appropriate to mitigate any potential impacts or to enhance the appearance of the site;
- d) Existing and proposed dwellings have sufficient curtilage space; and

Comment: The proposed materials would not sit quietly, resulting in harm to the setting of the Church, churchyard and Conservation Area. The location of the ancillary buildings, close to and highly visible from Church Field, would create a cluttered entry point and harm the quiet aesthetics of the lane.

The proposal is significantly larger than its immediate neighbours, and deviates from the compact form and spatial qualities surrounding the site. Locating the proposed extension, ancillary structures and site entry point close to the northern boundary will create a cramped and unbalanced aesthetic.

SCLP 11.1 Design Quality

- b), states that proposals should understand the character of the built, historic, and natural environment and use this understanding to complement local character.
- c) i, states that the overall scale and character should clearly demonstrate consideration of its surroundings.
- c) iii, states that the height and massing of developments should relate to their surroundings.
- c) iv, states that proposals should demonstrate a clear relationship between buildings and spaces and the wider street scene or townscape.
- h) Provide highway layouts with well integrated car parking and landscaping which create a high quality public realm and avoid the perception of a car dominated environment. In doing so, proposals will be expected to prioritise safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle movement;
- i) Include hard and soft landscaping schemes to aid the integration of the development into its surroundings;
- j) Ensure that the layout and design incorporates adequate provision for the storage and collection of waste and recycling bins in a way which does not detract from the appearance of the development;

Comment: The proposed extension challenges the scale of the existing property, and the alterations would obliterate its quiet and understated qualities, affecting the setting of the Church and Conservation Area. The proposal does not display an understanding of local character nor the particular characteristics of Colt Houses.

The extent of development does not relate well to the Church or neighbouring properties, and compromises the spatial qualities of the site. Landscaping and bin collection details have not been provided and repositioning the access point will reduce visibility by placing the entrance just off a sharp bend in the road.

SCLP11.2: Residential Amenity

- a) Privacy/overlooking;
- b) Outlook;
- c) Access to daylight and sunlight;
- d) Noise and disturbance;
- e) The resulting physical relationship with other properties;
- f) Light spillage;

Comment: The development will impact the privacy of Half Acre through increased noise and disturbance resulting from the significantly increased accommodation. The cramped spatial qualities towards the northern boundary means the property will have a poor visual relationship with Half Acre.

The expanse of glazing to the south, coupled with rooflights to the south, north and west will result in increased light spillage visible from the churchyard, Conservation Area, Half Acre and Church Field.

SCLP11.3: Historic Environment

All development proposals which have the potential to impact on heritage assets or their settings should be supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment and/or an Archaeological Assessment prepared by an individual with relevant expertise. Pre-application consultation with the Council is encouraged to ensure the scope and detail of a Heritage Impact Assessment or Archaeological Assessment is sufficient. The level of detail of a Heritage Impact Assessment should be proportionate to the scheme proposed and the number and significance of heritage assets affected.

Comment: A Heritage Impact Assessment detailing the full impact the scheme would have on the Conservation Area, Grade I listed church and the AONB has not been provided.

5. Conclusion

The proposed materials are inappropriate for the location, and the resulting house would not satisfy the relevant policies of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (see section 4.0).

The doubling in size of an existing property will result in a house that sits uncomfortably in its plot, creating a cramped and unbalanced site. The over-provision of living space, kitchen and entrance raises additional concerns that the proposal is effectively for a second attached dwelling on the site.

The application would cause harm to:

- The Walberswick Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset)
- The setting of St Andrew's Church (a Grade I listed asset)
- The residential amenity of neighbouring properties
- Erosion of the sense of privacy for those visiting recent burials located directly alongside the boundary with Longwood.