

## **THE PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP (PAG)**

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting

07.05.25

The Planning Advisory Group was formed in 2014 and is appointed by Walberswick Parish Council to report on planning applications relating to the Village. The group comprises professionals with experience of architecture, planning and construction. Its members are Paul Bradley (who Chairs the group), Alan Gomm, Ben Whiting and Katherine Gomm. Bill Ungless and John Nichols maintain close links as Consultants, and Kay Ungless is the point of contact between us and Walberswick Parish Council.

The high number of planning applications affecting Walberswick means that it is not uncommon for the group to have two or three reports being prepared at any given point. Each application is initially assessed, usually by the Chair, and a meeting called. Each member of the group reviews the scheme independently and then we review the scheme collectively and reach a consensus. The writing up of a report is usually assigned to one or two individuals and is based on the group discussion. When drafted this document is circulated to the group for comment, amendment and approval. Once everyone has signed off the report it is sent to the Clerk of the Parish Council. A planning application takes each member approximately four hours to review, comment on and contribute to the written report, often longer. If this time is multiplied by the number of members in the group, and multiplied again by the number of applications we comment on per year (usually in the region of 30 to 40) you can see that the PAG is one of the busier groups in the village.

In addition to assessing schemes and writing reports we have played a key role in initiating discussion with ESC regarding an Article 4 Direction being placed on the village; this piece of legislation, should it be applied to Walberswick, would remove permitted development rights from certain areas of the village. The PAG sees this as a potential way of halting the rising instances of inappropriate change in the village, and is pushing ESC (through the Parish Council) to greatly increase the area of the village covered by the legislation.

Last year we commented on a number of controversial schemes, including one affecting a listed building and two relating to the redevelopment of sensitive sites where development could impact our wider (heavily protected) landscape. One application in particular saw the group adding its voice to 50 objections submitted by villagers. ESC took this village response seriously and asked the applicant to revise the scheme. PAG continued to support and advise the Parish Council through the Planning Committee process and as a result an entirely new scheme, taking on board several of the concerns raised by the village, has now been submitted for comment. What this demonstrates is twofold; the village cares about ill-mannered schemes that are changing the character of Walberswick and wishes its voice to be heard, and secondly that a loud collective village response is difficult for ESC to ignore.

The PAG will continue to scrutinise applications alongside local context and planning policy, and we hope villagers will continue to take an interest in proposals and submit comments where motivated to do so – it all helps demonstrate to ESC that Walberswick cares about, and is concerned about, our built and natural environment.

**Dr Paul Bradley**  
Chair, Planning Advisory Group