

Planning Advisory Group: Report to Walberswick to Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/16/3222/FUL
Longwood, Church Field, Walberswick, IP18 6TG

3.09.2016

1 The application relates to the demolition of the existing 3 bedroom bungalow and the construction of two five bedroom chalet bungalows in its stead.

The site adjoins the northern boundary of the Conservation Area and the churchyard of St Andrews. The house lies to the north of the plot, overlooking a large garden. Visible from The Street through the ruins of the church and along the eastern boundary, the garden contributes to the tranquillity and spaciousness of the churchyard and the setting of the church. The church is listed Grade 1.

Access to Longwood is from Church Field, a private road leading from Palmers Lane and developed from the 1960's onwards, predominately with single storey houses. It is understood that the restriction in height resulted from planning policy at the time, designed to minimise the impact of development on the sensitive boundaries to the Common to the north and the Church and churchyard to the south.

The house lies on the axis of Church Field at the point where the lane turns north and the density of development is noticeably reduced. The gravelled drive, the holly tree and the apple orchard at the entrance to Longwood close the view from Church Field and are important elements in defining the character of the lane. Gardens merge with the trees beyond to create an environment that is secluded, leafy and informal.

2 Although described in the application as chalet bungalows, the redevelopment in effect proposes the construction of two two storey houses (referred to as plots 1 and 2). No floor areas are given nor plan dimensions or ridge heights but it is clear from the amount of accommodation shown on the drawings that these will be substantial buildings (noted as such in the Design and Access Statement), having a significant impact on their surroundings.

The Design and Access Statement states that 'the dwellings sit on an extensive plot retaining a low overall density, in accordance with neighbouring plots' In fact, the proposed development would increase density in this corner of Church Field more than threefold, with a corresponding enlargement of building volume.

Plot 1 is sited to the north of the existing house, close to the northern boundary and overshadowing the neighbouring bungalow, 'Half Acre', and its garden. The view along Church Field to the surrounding trees will be obscured by the bulk of the new building. The orchard at the entrance is to be destroyed in order to construct the additional vehicular access and turning areas required to service plot 1. Unlike the existing gravelled drive, the new access will be paved in tarmac.

The Design and Access Statement provides no environmental appraisal of Church Field.

Equally detrimental is the development of Plot 2. The intention is to build the house in the south east corner of the plot, less than four metres from the boundary of the churchyard. At ground floor, the house will present a wall to the churchyard, more than 16 metres long, incorporating a rear entrance door and windows to a kitchen and utility room. At first floor, dormer windows from two bedrooms will directly overlook the area of the churchyard where burials currently take place and graves are visited by the bereaved.

The mass of the house will clearly be seen in conjunction with the church when viewed across the churchyard and from The Street.

No elevations or sectional drawings have been provided to show these relationships. Indeed, other than indicating the church on the site location plan, the application makes no reference to the church or the churchyard.

3 Despite invoking the 'New England' style as an inspiration, the architecture of the new houses is undistinguished and inappropriate. The assemblage of steeply pitched roofs and dormers gives an obtrusive and overbearing character to the already significant bulk of the houses. The intention to paint the timber cladding light green and windows, barge boards, gutters etc white will serve to make the development more conspicuous.

The proposal is in contrast to the quiet simplicity of the existing house, where the single storey form, well composed elevations and weathered timber cladding integrate the building with its surroundings.

4 The application to redevelop Longwood has similarities to the recently refused proposal for a house to the rear of The Old Rectory and the same comments apply:

- The proposal is obtrusive in its mass and form and will be detrimental to the setting of the Church
- The proposal threatens the spacious and tranquil character of the churchyard
- The proposal will have a negative impact on surrounding properties
- The proposal will erode the established character of Church Field
- The proposal will result in the loss of garden area to the detriment of the local environment

4 In the opinion of the Planning Advisory group, the proposed development would cause serious harm to the setting of a Grade 1 Heritage Asset, the wider

Conservation Area and the established character of Church Field, and is in conflict with provisions of the Local Plan:

- Policy DM 7 does not allow the subdivision of plots where development would 'reduce the residential amenity' or 'result in the erosion of the particular character of the surroundings' nor where a proposal is not 'well related to adjacent properties'
- According to Policy DM 21 'proposals that comprise poor visual design and layout, or otherwise detract from the character of their surroundings will not be permitted'
- According to Policy DM 23 'When considering the impact of new development on residential amenity, the Council will have regard [amongst other matters] to the resulting physical relationship with other properties'

On these grounds, we consider the proposal is unacceptable.