

Paules Fenn, The Street

DC/21/3496/FUL

[Upgrading the external walls with external insulation and render, relaying and upgrading the roofs with additional insulation, demolition of existing chimneys, extension of the living areas on the garden side, extension of the bedroom wing on the street elevation, and construction of a new upper storey.](#)

1. Opinion

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group this application should be **refused**.

2. Description

As The Street threads its way east through the conservation area it passes a series of key elements which contribute to the character of Walberswick. Starting at the Church and ending at the Harbour, between which lies an impressive variety of dwelling types, including 15th to 18th century houses, generous early 20th century villas, small artisan cottages, and a spacious Village Green surrounded by a mix of attractive cottages. All these parts contribute to making a success of the whole and the conservation area, particularly The Street, is enriched by its diverse building stock.

Paules Fenn is a vital part of this thread, sitting as it does after the dark and enclosed tree-lined part of The Street, between Palmers and Stocks Lane. Paules Fenn and its garden play an important part in the character of the conservation area and the immediate setting of the grade II listed red brick barn opposite.

The lowness of the existing house is a marker which allows The Street to 'breathe' at this point, and providing a sense of the openness beyond towards the sea. The house, a modest bungalow, is an excellent example of early 1950s design, combining local vernacular while being 'Modern' in style, and responding with considerable sensitivity to both the needs of the client and the characteristics of the site. The resulting low-key character is very appealing.

The house was built for the artist Clifford Russell by the well-known and reputable architect Felix Walter. Clifford Russell became wheelchair-bound when injured and paralysed in WW2 serving in a Tank Regiment and Paules Fenn is the first known house in the UK built specifically to facilitate wheelchair use. As such it is unique, and its plan form is very important.

Clifford Russell was a considerable artist, known for his precise and atmospheric representations of the Blyth and its environment. Drawings which Russell did from the cockpit of a tank during the war are represented in the Imperial War Museum. He also designed the Walberswick Village Sign which stands outside St Andrews Church and is notable in the history of the Village.

The application for Paules Fenn proposes to increase the height of a section of the house to two storey, on what is otherwise a deliberately low and linear composition. The works would include the destruction of almost all of the south elevation, and a remaining chimney stack would be removed. The house would be completely refaced in an attempt to improve thermal efficiency.

The Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal specifically draws attention to the need to give consideration to the visibility and character of the external boundaries of the village (see pages 17 and 18 of the Appraisal). Looking north to the CA, the lowness of Paules Fenn reflects the horizontality of the surrounding landscape. The Applicant's proposal would destroy a subtle relationship here.

Paules Fenn is discussed and illustrated in the following publications: The Journal of The 20th Century Society, Journal 4 (p.87); Penn, Colin *Houses of Today* (1954, p.130) and Walter, Felix *50 Modern Bungalows* (1955, p.100-102). Images of the house are reproduced from *50 Modern Bungalows* at the end of this report.

3.0 Policy background

Paules Fenn is identified within the Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal (2013) as an unlisted building that contributes positively to the conservation area (p.29).

It also meets East Suffolk Council's criteria for Non-Designated Heritage Status, specifically: *aesthetic value, known architect, aesthetic value, association, rarity and representativeness*.

The following policies are also relevant, and are not satisfied by the submitted application:

SCLP 11.1 Design Quality:

Clause b) states that proposals should understand the character of the built, historic, and natural environment and use this understanding to complement local character

Clause c) i states that the overall scale and character should clearly demonstrate consideration of its surroundings

Clause c) iii states that the height and massing of developments should relate to their surroundings

Clause c) iv, states that proposals should demonstrate a clear relationship between buildings and spaces and the wider street scene or townscape

SCLP 11.5 Conservation Areas:

Clause b) states that proposals should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of a Conservation Area

Clause c) states that proposals should be of appropriate design, scale, form, height, massing and position

Clause d) states, retain features important to the settlement form and pattern

SCLP 11.6 Non Designated Heritage Assets:

Clause a) and b), state the need to protect such assets, whilst technically feasible and economical viable and to fully investigate these issues.

Finally, while the application contains a 'Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement' it is not felt this document satisfies the requirements of Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (July 2021). It does not demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the property, nor the impact development would have on the house and conservation area.

4.0 Comment and Conclusion

The upgrading rendering / part cladding of the external walls, and increase in height to part of the property would result in the appearance of a new dwelling on the site, and preserve nothing of the successful relationship between the house and its setting.

The destruction of the north and south elevations, which are very carefully composed and particularly successful, and the erosion of a significant plan form would substantially harm the qualities of a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.

The proposed scheme would have a negative impact on the conservation area and the wider setting of the grade II listed barn opposite.

In conclusion, the proposal fails to satisfy local and national planning policy as detailed in Section 3.0 of this document, for the reasons set out in section 2.0.

This application should be refused.



Fig. 1, Paules Fenn, north elevation, c1955. Reproduced from '50 Modern Bungalows' by Felix Walter. The compositional skill and sensitivity to the site of Walter's scheme is apparent, as is the boldness of the chimneys and their importance to the overall composition.

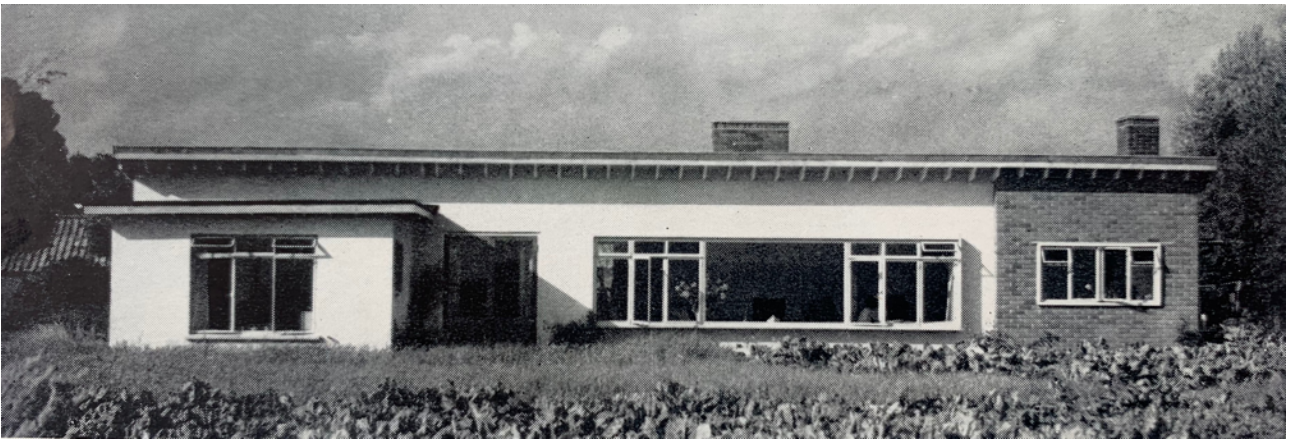


Fig. 2, Paules Fenn, south elevation, c1955. Reproduced from '50 Modern Bungalows' by Felix Walter. The carefully composed garden façade and strong horizontal design.

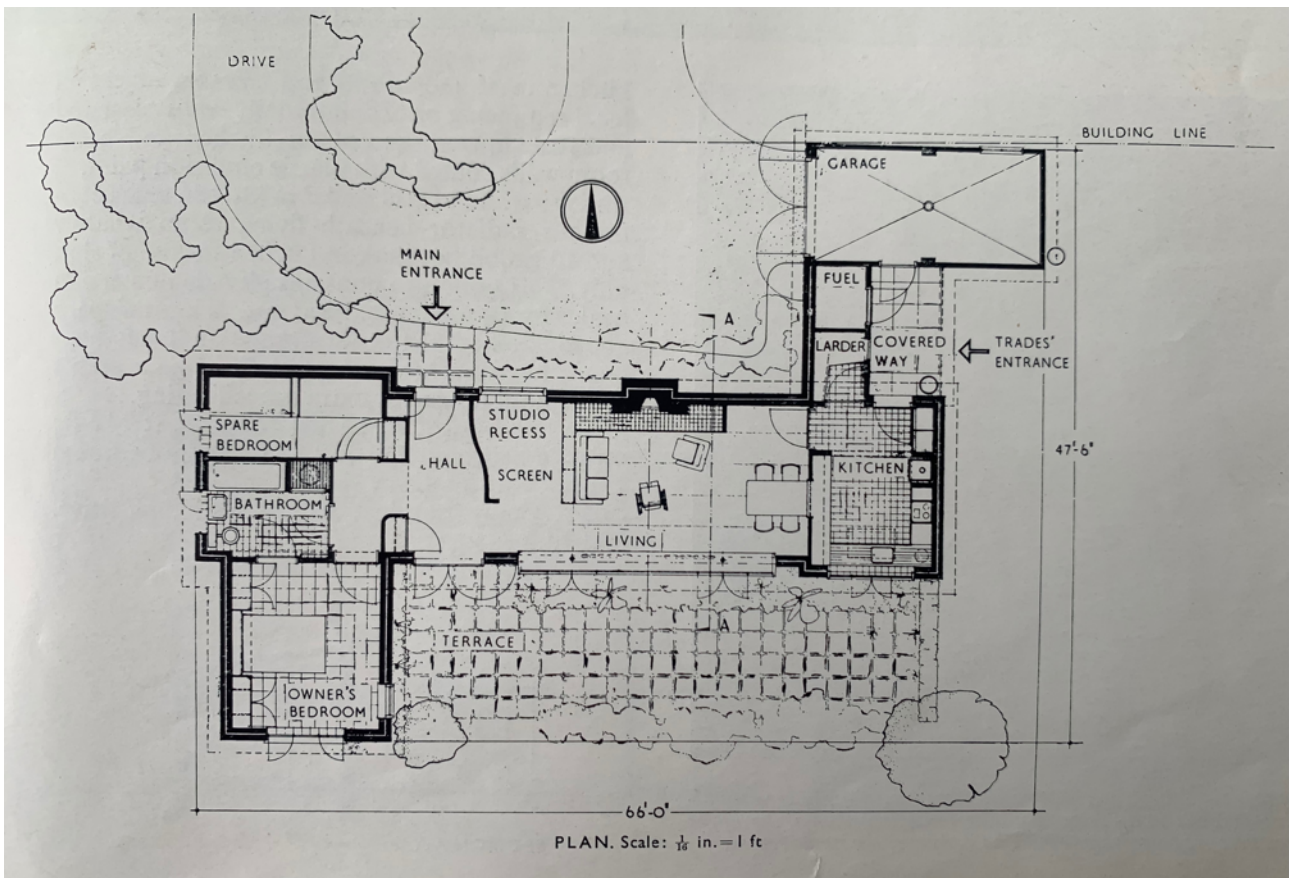


Fig. 4, Paules Fenn, floor plan, c1955. Reproduced from '50 Modern Bungalows' by Felix Walter. An early and important plan designed to suit the needs of a wheelchair-bound client.