

Planning Advisory Group: Report to Walberswick Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/16/0601/FUL
White Barn, Leverett's Lane, Walberswick, IP18 6TS

Revised 29 .02.2016

1 The application relates to the construction of a two-storey extension to the west of White Barn, including a new vehicular drive from Leverett's Lane. The site is within the Walberswick Conservation Area and therefore subject to the advice and recommendations of the Conservation Area Appraisal, approved by SCDC in December 2013 and registered as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2 White Barn is one of eleven or more houses in Walberswick designed by the local architect, Frank Jennings. Their significance and value is recognised in the Appraisal, which comments:

These houses are all designed in the Arts and Crafts style, and the vast majority contain reclaimed medieval timber fixings and structure. These houses contribute significantly to the Walberswick Conservation Area, not only as being worthy examples of early-20th-century domestic architecture but for their advancement of the local vernacular style.

The importance of Jennings' work is also noted in Pevsner's Buildings of England series (see Suffolk: East revised 2015) which makes specific reference to White Barn.

In other words these houses are a valuable part of the heritage of the village and should be protected as such.

3 The Conservation Area Appraisal also refers to the objective stated in the Local Plan that new development 'should maintain and enhance the quality of the distinctive natural and built environment.'

In this respect, the Appraisal notes under paragraph 12.4 the 'very specific and appealing character' of Leverett's Lane. The houses are set on a plateau, raised above the lane by a continuous leafy bank with tall hedges and extending into The Street. The spacious layout, the alternating rhythm of house and garden, the open boundary to the north, the tree'd setting and the encircling bank are all cited as valuable elements contributing to this character.

4 Within these objectives, the Planning Advisory Group comments as follows:

- The floor area of the proposed extension is 80% of the area of the existing house, almost the doubling the amount of available space. The resulting scale and form of the new building will cause harm to the character and setting of the original house and to the conservation area.

- There is little attempt to integrate the extension with White Barn: rather, the proposal has the appearance of a separate house linked by a single-storey corridor. The design of the prominent crow stepped gables is alien: in general the architecture does not match the quality or interest of the Jennings original.
- The siting of the extension close to the northern boundary will introduce an oppressive monolithic element to Leverett's Lane, at the expense of the open boundary referred to in the Appraisal and upsetting the established rhythm of houses and gardens along the lane. The siting will obscure important views of the house from the west.
- The creation of a new drive from Leverett's Lane, to bring cars to the front door, will destroy Jennings's unusual and imaginative design for the entrance steps and garden, illustrated in the Historic Assessment Report submitted by the applicant and in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- The scale and character of the proposed drive is obtrusive and destructive of the perimeter bank referred to in the Appraisal as an important element of the village environment.

It is worth noting that there is vehicular access to the site from the lane running to the southern boundary of the property; a separate planning application has been submitted for the development of garaging for four cars in this location.

5 In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group, the development will have a negative impact on an important house and its surroundings and is in conflict with the Local Plan. Policy DM21 states that 'proposals that comprise poor visual design and layout, or otherwise seriously detract from the character of their surroundings will not be permitted'. Policy DM23 states that '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 this basis, we consider the proposal to be unacceptable.