

Planning Advisory Group: report to Walberswick Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/20/2321/FUL

Demolition and Redevelopment of Commonsides Palmers Lane IP18 6TD

1 Opinion

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group the application does not comply with relevant provisions of DM21 and DM23 of the Local Plan and should be refused

2 Description

2.1 The existing property, Commonsides, is a two storey house with a single storey extension, on the edge of the village at the north end of Palmers Lane.

Following refusal of the recent application to redevelop the site with two detached houses, a revised scheme has been submitted for a two storey house with a nett floor area of 330m² and five double bedrooms. The form of the house is derived from the H shaped plan, with wings facing east and west joined by a two storey link.

The development will include a cart lodge with garaging for three cars and recreation space above with a nett floor area of 42m². Three additional parking spaces will be provided in the large entrance forecourt. An open air swimming pool of 30m² will be constructed towards the southern boundary of the plot

2.2 The northern perimeter of the village which provides the context for the development has an open, fragmented character. Small single and two storey dwellings are scattered informally amongst the open spaces linking the Common with Moorsides to the east and the gardens of Church Field to the south. The bridleway from Palmers Lane and Chapel Lane, which gives access to the site, is a popular route for walkers. The house will be conspicuous from this viewpoint.

3 Comment

3.1 The scale of the proposed development significantly exceeds the area and volume of the existing house: the amount of habitable space is more than doubled and the frontage to the Common will be increased by one third. Considered together with the cart lodge, the extensive parking forecourt, the swimming pool and the dominant roof scape, the extent of development is detrimental to the low key, rural setting of the site.

3.2 The H plan form and the dominating roof slopes impose a symmetry and formality on the house which is alien to the character of its surroundings.

3.3 The increased frontage of the proposed house will obstruct the link from the Common to the gardens to the south.

3.4 Overlooking

Rooflights in the west elevation and the dormer window in the east elevation will overlook the adjoining gardens of Herons and The Durdans to the detriment of their amenity. The siting of the swimming pool may also harm the amenity of the adjoining garden unless adequate screening is provided.

3.5 Trees

It is not clear from the drawings which trees will be removed to make way for the development and which will be replaced in mitigation. Question 10 of the application form states there are no trees or shrubs of significance which will be affected by the development. Seen from the boundary, this does not appear to be the case. A tree survey and assessment is required to evaluate the trees within the site and their contribution to the character of the area

3.5 Passivhaus

The intention to construct the house to certifiable Passivhaus standards is confirmed in the Design and Access Statement which also refers to the applicant's experience in this field

3.6 Biodiversity and the impact on the Special Area of Conservation

The site adjoins Walberswick Common, a designated SSSI and a Special Area of Conservation. The Common is an important habitat for adders, nightingales and other protected species. This is not reflected in the response to question 12 of the application form which states there are no important habitat or other biodiversity features on or near the site.

In considering the impact of the development on the SAC the pre-app planning officer noted that additional mitigation might be required in addition to the RAMSAR payments. The Ecological Appraisal does not adequately deal with this aspect of the Habitats Regulations.

3.7 Justification of Need

The Design and Access Statement concludes with the assertion that the development will provide 'much needed' energy efficient open plan accommodation in Walberswick. This takes no account of the findings of the Parish Plan which recorded the widely expressed need for small and affordable dwellings in the village to ensure its sustainability, rather than five bedroom luxury homes such as proposed here.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The reduction in the number of dwellings from two to one alleviates the cramped and suburban quality of the previous application and is to be welcomed. However, in the opinion of the PAG, the scale and form of the house is excessive and does not relate well to its surroundings. The proposal is contrary to the provisions of DM21 and DM23 and should be refused.

