Planning Advisory Group: report to Walberswick Parish Council

DC/20/3414/FUL

Longwood, Church Field, Walberswick, IP18 6TG

Demolition of existing bungalow and garage and the erection of two new dwellings with car port and garage

21/09/20

1.0 Opinion

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group this application would cause harm to the setting of a designated heritage asset, the conservation area and neighbouring properties and should be **refused**.

2.0 Description

This application concerns the demolition of a recently upgraded 1960s bungalow and detached garage, the erection of two dwellings, creation of an additional drive access, garage and carport.

The garden at Longwood borders the Walberswick Conservation Area and churchyard of the Grade I listed St Andrew's Church. The site is located within the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

An application to demolish Longwood and erect two dwellings was submitted and subsequently withdrawn (during September 2016) - planning reference number DC/16/3222/FUL.

3.0 Policy background

Three policies from the Local Plan are particularly relevant here; Policy DM7 (Infilling), Policy DM21 (Design: Aesthetics) and Policy DM23 (Residential Amenity).

DM7. In theory there is space for more than one dwelling on the plot, but there are issues against clause a) and c); cramped form of development and being well related to adjacent properties.
DM21. The proposals do not satisfy clauses a), e) and f), which refer to the scale and character of surroundings (particularly siting, height, massing and form), protection of heritage assets and form, scale and spacing of neighbouring buildings.
DM23. There are concerns regarding clauses a), b) and e) relating to privacy/overlooking, outlook and physical relationship with other properties.

An additional more general strategic policy SP15 considers distinctive historical and architectural value of villages, gaps and the unbuilt form. The supporting text makes reference to Conservation Areas and historic buildings, and clearly St. Andrew's Church is relevant here.

4.0 Comment

Longwood is a 1960s bungalow by Colt & Sons; a Kent based company who pioneered the design and supply of pre-fabricated buildings. Typically, as is the case at Longwood, the walls and roof of a Colt house were clad in Cedar and this, coupled with simple forms and detailing ensured such buildings were unpretentious. Longwood is one of a cluster of five houses by Colt.

Church Field is a private no through road and the entrance to Longwood is aligned with the junction of this lane and Palmers Lane, and located to the corner where the lane turns to the north.

Longwood has a low-lying form which is particularly suited to its sensitive site, which forms a backdrop to the church. Several of the houses on Church Field are also single storey with large gardens and this creates an open and spacious quality that is particularly evident around Longwood and the properties to the north. Hedges and trees make a positive contribution to the quiet rural character of the lane.

In such a sensitive location, adjacent to the church, design considerations are paramount. The following points relate to the clauses in DM21, particularly a), e) and f).

The roof of the existing dwelling can be seen from The Street and from within the churchyard. Save for a short chimneystack the existing roof pitch is uninterrupted and this, coupled with its low height and the lack of visible gable ends, means the existing roof makes effort to be a recessive and modest element.

The application describes the proposed units as being storey and a half, but the footprint of the first floor accommodation is barely smaller than the ground floor and these are in fact sizeable dwellings. Dwelling One (to the north of the site) is shown as having five bedrooms and Dwelling Two (to the south) has four.

The height of the proposed dwellings means they would present a significant expanse of roofs, gable ends, glass and rooflights to the churchyard – this is confirmed by the photomontage submitted with the application. Proposed to the south elevation of each new dwelling are first floor balconies with pairs of doors opening onto each, creating significant potential for overlooking the churchyard. It is worth stating that recent burials are located along the northern edge of the churchyard adjacent to the boundary of Longwood, and that this is a regularly visited part of the churchyard. The proposed properties (particularly Dwelling Two) would have a detrimental impact on the privacy of those attending a funeral or visiting a grave.

When viewed from The Street, the proposed dwellings would be highly visible in views of the church and from within the church ruins, and they would have a negative impact on the setting of the Grade I listed church and conservation area.

The location of Dwelling One (close to the north boundary) and Dwelling Two (to the south / east) would have an impact on the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties Half Acre and Bentles (the latter incorrectly labelled on the proposed site plan as The Old Rectory). In particular the north gable of Dwelling One has paired

balconies and doors which would overlook the living accommodation and rear garden of Half Acre.

The introduction of an additional drive entrance off Church Field (to Dwelling One) would result in the regrettable destruction of the apple orchard, which makes a positive contribution to the green and open character of the lane.

The application form makes reference to material notes on the accompanying plans, but these could not be found, preventing comment being made. The roof plan on the proposed site plan for the garage to Dwelling One does not match the submitted elevations and the appendices referred to in the Planning Statement could not be found.

5.0 Conclusion

The planning balance here suggests that the potential in Policy DM7 is outweighed by the harm that would be caused to the conservation area, neighbouring properties and the setting of the designated heritage asset.

The proposals do not satisfy policy DM21 which states ‘proposals that comprise poor visual design and layout, or otherwise detract from the character of their surroundings will not be permitted’ or Policy DM23 which states ‘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’.

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory group, the proposal conflicts with the abovementioned Local Plan policies. Additionally, the proposed form of the developments would cause serious harm to the setting of a Grade I heritage asset and would compromise the privacy of those visiting graves. It would also cause harm to the Conservation Area, neighbouring properties and potentially to the character of this part of Church Field.