

DC/23/4447/FUL

Mulberry House, Millfield Road, Walberswick, Suffolk, IP18 6UD

“Removal of existing hedge to front boundary which consists mainly of Ivy and is thinning / dying. Installation of a Continuous Willow Fence of similar dimensions to existing hedge. By Brampton Willows - <https://www.bramptonwillows.co.uk/> This will be 1.8m in height at it's tallest and 1.5m at it's lowest, set back from the adjacent road by 2m. There will be no negative impact to sight lines, visibility, or light in neighbouring properties”.

06.12.23

1. Opinion

In the opinion of the PAG / WPC this application does not accord with Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) specific to the Walberswick Conservation Area.

If not in compliance with SPD then the application should be **refused**.

2. Description

This application proposes the removal of a mature hedge to the south east boundary of Mulberry House, and replacement with a willow fence.

The existing hedge is prominent in long views looking south west along Millfield Road.

The site is located within the Walberswick Conservation Area and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

3. Comment

Within East Suffolk, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans that have been through public consultation, and then adoption by the Local Authority, form Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). As such they provide additional guidance on matters covered by the Local Plan and are material considerations in decision making.

The Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was adopted during December 2013 and makes the following comments which are pertinent to this application:

*“Where possible, timber fences should be replaced with mixed native hedging, as this is softer and less uniform in appearance, and provides beneficial habitat for wildlife”
(p20)*

It is logical therefore that, where possible, hedges being replaced with uniform fences should be avoided.

“The... area centred on Millfield Road and Leveretts Lane... is one dominated by large Edwardian villas in mature landscaped grounds which can occasionally be glimpsed behind tall hedges and trees...” (p21)

“The road (Millfield Road) has groups of mature trees interspersed within private gardens and established hedges to front boundaries give a strong sense of privacy” (p42).

Hedges are mentioned as a characteristic of Millfield Road within the General Character Appraisal and also within the Millfield Road section of the Street by Street Appraisal. Consequently, their role and importance within the Conservation Area is clearly defined.

“Important natural features such as trees and hedgerows also make a major contribution (to the Conservation Area). It is vitally important therefore, that these special characteristics are retained and reinforced” (p52)

“...undesirable changes can include inappropriate alterations (including)... construction of intrusive walls, balustrades and fences...” (p52)

“New boundary treatments to property can also provide enhancement to the conservation area... Walls, fences, railings and hedges (whether native or ornamental) can be carefully chosen to reflect local styles and respond / create a sense of local distinctiveness” (p55)

The Management Plan is clear regarding the importance of natural features and boundary treatments within the Conservation Area.

4. Summary

Removal of the existing hedge and replacement with a uniform woven fence does not comply with specific comments contained within the adopted Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (see above).

The importance of hedgerows are clearly highlighted within the Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, in particular that it is *“vitally important... that these special characteristics are **retained and reinforced**”*.

The proposed work would not retain or reinforce an existing hedgerow and would fail to preserve or enhance the Conservation Area and AONB.