

DC/23/2257/FUL

Box Bush, Seven Acres Lane, Walberswick, Suffolk, IP18 6UL

“Removing modern glass conservatory on south elevation and make kitchen window into double doors to garden. Extending clay peg tile roof on north elevation and adding leaded window dormer on the second floor”.

02/07/2023

1. Opinion

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group this application would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and should be **refused**.

2. Description

Box Bush is a detached house of 1939, built using a timber frame salvaged from Bedingham and re-erected in its current position by the talented architect Frank Jennings. Jennings has an important architectural legacy in Walberswick, and his buildings are highly regarded by those who live in them, villagers and visitors. Box Bush represents a late work by Jennings and arguably is the least altered example of his houses. It represents a near perfect combination of house and setting.

The property is located within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and it makes a significant contribution to views from the footpath to the south west, as well as being a notable highlight of the Seven Acres Lane streetscape.

Box Bush is currently being assessed by Historic England for listing.

3. Comment and Relevant Policy

Box Bush meets the following East Suffolk Council criteria for identifying non-designated heritage assets:

- Aesthetic value. The house has a vernacular, Arts and Crafts appearance and incorporates significant historic fabric. Features such as the weatherboarding, leaded lights, and deep overhanging eaves are typical of Jennings' work and important component features of the Suffolk vernacular design. The house makes a significant contribution to the AONB and the Seven Acres Lane streetscape.
- Known architect - The house was designed by Frank Jennings, a prominent architect.
- Integrity - The house has undergone little change from the original design.

Given its prominent location within the AONB, this application should be referred to the AONB Planning Officer.

The proposal, while seemingly modest, proposes significant change to the property.

The removal of the modern conservatory to the south elevation is welcomed.

However, a number of concerns arise from the submitted drawings, and the scheme does not accord with Local Plan policies **SCLP 11.1 (Design Quality)**, **SCLP 11.3 (Historic Environment)** and **SCLP 11.6 (Non-Designated Heritage Assets)**.

3.1 External Alterations

Extending the north roof pitch to provide a covered porch is acceptable in principle, but the drawings lack detail and the porch is not shown on the proposed side elevation (incorrectly labelled as east when it should read west). The roof extension means that the first floor landing window will look out onto the underside of the porch roof, rather than having a view, which will impede the use and light quality of this space. A circular corner post to support the roof is shown on plan, but no indication is given about the material, nor is it shown on the proposed west elevation.

The removal of the historic doorcase and its accompanying hardwood door (both shown on the existing north elevation, but not on the proposed) and replacement with a boarded door (no material notes provided) will erode the distinctiveness and quality of the entrance elevation. The loss of the ground floor window to the side of the entrance door is not supported as this, combined with the reduced light levels from the extended porch roof overhanging the first floor landing window, causes concern regarding light levels around the staircase. It should be noted that the ground floor window is shown on the existing north elevation but not the corresponding proposed elevation, yet it is shown on both the existing and proposed ground floor plans. Clarification regarding this would be welcome.

The proposed dormer to the north (entrance) elevation is likely justifiable in terms of head height over the attic stair and improving light levels, but the size and appearance of the dormer is not supported and its appearance fails to integrate with the form and appearance of the house. Its size is also discordant with the other openings found to the property. Further study of the work of Frank Jennings would help resolve this conflict.

The French doors proposed to the south elevation are considered acceptable in principle, but given the AONB and the quality of the house, and the lack of notes about proposed materials, this requires clarification.

3.2 Internal Alterations

Internally a number of changes to the plan form are proposed. The removal of the staircase is not supported. This is not noted on any of the drawings, but the arrangement shown on the existing plans differs from what is shown on the proposed. It is assumed that this is the original Jennings designed stair and potentially incorporates historic material?

The proposed ground floor plan to what is assumed to be the sitting room (room designations are lacking on all submitted drawings) shows two new windows to the east elevation flanking the existing central window (this elevation is incorrectly labelled as west on the drawings). However, this window configuration is not shown on the proposed elevation, so what is being applied for is uncertain and requires clarification.

The second floor plans show a reconfiguration of the accommodation to provide an additional room to the west end of the house. No section drawing has been provided so it is difficult to determine how floor to ceiling heights will work within this lower section of the roof. The proposed room also has no windows and the proposed floor plan does not indicate what this room will be used for.

4. Summary

This proposal raises questions relating the accuracy and completeness of the submitted drawings as there are a number of inaccuracies between what is shown on plan not corresponding with the submitted elevations, and it is not always entirely clear what is actually being applied for.

When seen in aggregate, the changes are considered to propose a level of alteration that would detrimentally impact the character and significance of a NDHA, while having the potential to cause harm within the AONB.

A Heritage Impact Assessment should accompany the application to aid understanding of the proposed changes, in-line with **SCLP 11.30**.

Should Historic England statutorily protect Box Bush as a listed building during the consultation period we would provide further comment on this scheme or any revised drawings.