

**DC/23/2369/FUL**

**Toby Cottage, Leveretts Lane, Walberswick, Suffolk, IP18 6UF**

*“Renovation of existing house and annexe wing. New link extension between annexe and house. Rebuilding of existing kitchen extension”*

**03/07.23**

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## **1. Opinion**

In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group this application should be **refused** on the grounds that the design of the new 'link' is not appropriate in detailed design terms and does not 'preserve or enhance' the Conservation Area or a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

## **2. Description**

Toby Cottage is within the Conservation Area, and adjacent to the Old Corner House which is a listed building (Grade II), so clearly extra care is necessary when considering the planning implications of the proposed works. Since Toby Cottage sits immediately adjacent to Leveretts Lane (with only a very narrow front garden) the impact on the street scene is an important consideration.

The proposal is for 'renovation and refurbishment', but in terms of the main elements of the planning application the most significant aspect is the construction of a link between the house and an existing single storey annexe. Additionally, there is some modest re-modelling of the roof structure of a single storey rear extension. Internal works will also be carried out, but are not subject to planning permission.

Toby Cottage was designed by prominent local architect Frank Jennings for his sister. Jennings' influence can be found in several of the dwellings constructed in the village through his role as an advisor to the Blois Estate, which is the owner of much of the surrounding land. His designs demonstrate a thorough knowledge and appreciation of traditional local building styles and materials. Toby Cottage is identified as a positive unlisted building in the Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal, and is considered to be a 'non-designated heritage asset' (NDHA), meeting East Suffolk Council's own criteria for identification of such assets.

## **3. Comment**

There is clear acknowledgment by the applicant and East Suffolk Council (in their pre-application advice) that the location (adjacent to a listed building, and within the Conservation Area) and the history of the house (designed by and lived in by a relative of Frank Jennings) means that care is needed to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the area.

The scheme as a whole is modest, and the external appearance of the main house will not be significantly altered. However, there are a number of aspects which cause concern.

The new structure linking the main house to the existing annexe is intended to be subservient to the existing buildings. It has a shallow pitched roof of standing seam metal, but as the colour is not confirmed it is difficult to give a definite opinion on the suitability. Vertical untreated boarding (left to weather naturally) is proposed as the external cladding. However, the juxtaposition of this vertical boarding (modern and precision cut) with the distinctly horizontal waney edge boarding to the first-floor of the house (and proposed in place of the annexe garage doors) would seem to be a discordant feature. Notwithstanding the intention to have a contemporary link building there would seem to be a clash of material use. A more appropriate design solution could be achieved by using render, as is present on the existing ground floor elevation of the main house. This would bring a more harmonious and low-key look to the Leverett's Lane frontage, which could further be softened with planting, thereby continuing and enhancing the rural qualities of the existing front garden to the cottage.

Additionally, the small windows proposed to the link introduce another different design feature to the house / link and make it read as accommodation rather than a more simple structure. A plain frontage to the link with no windows (perhaps replaced with roof lights in the link roof) would allow for the 'subservient' aspiration as stated in the Design and Access Statement.

The existing annexe is to be remodelled internally in conjunction with the new link. The current annexe has a pair of garage doors on the Leveretts Lane elevation. This currently gives a pleasant domestic feel to the property. These doors are lost in the proposals and replaced with waney edge board to the whole of the annexe (former garage) gable end. In PAG's opinion it would be a more appropriate design solution to retain or re-make the garage doors, painted to match the joinery on the main house.

The purpose of making an objection to these design elements is to better preserve and enhance the Conservation Area in this important part of Leveretts Lane. Additionally, the design as presented displays a number of discordant elements, which taken together distract from the acknowledged 'non designated heritage asset' which is Toby Cottage. In this respect we find that the proposal does not meet policy **SCLP 11.1 (Design Quality)** clauses b) and c). In respect of policy **SCLP 11.5 (Conservation Area Development)** it does not adequately fulfil clause c) which calls for 'appropriate design'.

The current annexe is self-contained in that it has bedroom, bathroom, living and, kitchen facilities. Although altered in the proposal the newly re-formed annexe (together with the improved facilities in the link) is still capable of being a separate unit of accommodation. On the basis of the improved / upgraded facilities, and the enhanced attractiveness of the separate accommodation unit it is requested that a condition be imposed on any permission that the annexe can only be occupied in conjunction with the main house and not let separately as holiday accommodation or sold as a separate unit. This should cause no problems as the applicants say Toby Cottage remains a single unit, and there is no change of use, but protects the village from increased pressure from extra short term holiday lettings.

Pre – application advice was sought from East Suffolk and the conclusions were:

- *The proposals would not impact the significance of the adjacent Grade II listed building, The Old Corner House.*
- *Toby Cottage is a positive unlisted building within the Walberswick Conservation Area and has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset.*

- *Overall, the proposals are likely to be acceptable with a few minor amendments requested to ensure that the proposals will conserve the character and appearance of this building and the conservation area.*

PAG would clearly agree with the first two points but upon a detailed consideration of the design issues we find there are discordant features in the proposed design which suggests an objection as detailed above.

#### **4. Summary**

The proposals for works to the main Toby Cottage structure are considered acceptable.

However, an objection is raised to the submitted scheme because of the effect the design of the new link from Toby Cottage to re-modelled annexe will have on the integrity of the 'non designated heritage asset', and the fact that it will not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. This relates to the elements visible from Leveretts Lane.

The design objections relate to:

- The cladding material for the link, in detail the board type and orientation.
- Windows in the link building which are distinctly modern and contrast poorly with the main house.
- The loss of the garage doors on the existing annexe and the effect on the street scene.