

Walberswick Parish Council additional response to AP/26/0017/REFUSE

6005541 Herons, Church Field, Walberswick

As Walberswick Parish Council, we have reviewed the appellant's Planning Appeal Statement in detail and write to provide additional response to be considered alongside our original comment on the application.

We do not agree with the appellant's characterisation of the site, the scale of the proposal, the claimed mitigation measures, or the assertion that the development would not cause the harms identified at previous stages of the application process.

Our objections remain firm and are strengthened by the content of the appeal statement which continued to lack of care or insight into the unique character of the appeal site's natural and built environment.

The Appellant Misrepresents the Character and Sensitivity of the Site

The appellant repeatedly asserts that the site "is experienced as part of a settled landscape rather than as open countryside." We fundamentally disagree.

To the West of Herons sits one of the most tranquil and environmentally sensitive parts of Walberswick. Edging as it does an expanse of highly protected common land that gradually undulates to grazing marshland and the river. The existing bungalow is "a low-lying form which is particularly suited to its sensitive site," and the surrounding houses are modest, largely single-storey, set within large gardens that create "an open and spacious quality." The two storey houses to which the appellant relies on in their case are situated further down Church Field to the North and East.

The appellant's attempt to normalise a two-storey, 380m² dwelling in this context is inaccurate and misleading.

The Appellant Downplays the Scale and Visual Impact of the Proposal

The appeal statement claims the proposal has been "materially reduced in scale" and "does not appear overly dominant." This is true only in respect to their initial proposal. To accept that challenge then we would all enter grossly oversized application which we then made the appearance of moderating and 'evolving'.

The proposal was objected to because it represents an unacceptable increase in scale in this plot. The appeal relies on references to scale in urban setting and 'most village settings'. Whilst at the same time claims to have responded to the specific surrounding through it's design.

The scale of the proposed development significantly exceeds the area and volume of the existing bungalow. The amount of habitable space is more than doubled.

The appellant's own drawings confirm this. The proposed dwelling introduces:

A full additional storey

A dominant roofscape

A large parking area

A swimming pool

Extensive glazing

This is a substantial intensification of built form on the edge of the protected Common land where any intensification will cause harm.

The Appellant's Reliance on Plot Size and Orientation Is Misplaced

The appellant argues that generous separation distances and a change in orientation mitigate harm to residential amenity of neighbouring properties. The parish council did not specifically object to the change in orientation but to the close proximity to the natural environment on the north elevation.

The issue is not simply distance — it is **height, bulk, activity, and visibility**.

The existing bungalow creates no overlooking. The appellant's proposal introduces:

First-floor living areas with accompanying increased light spill

Significant glazing facing Commons side and Shearwater

A first-floor seating area overlooking neighbouring gardens

A ground-floor entertainment area facing west

The residential amenity of adjacent properties is compromised by the 2-storey format, extensive glazing, and swimming pool location.

The appellant's suggestion that these impacts are negligible is not supported by the physical reality of the site nor the unprecedented number of objections from our residents.

The Appellant Underestimates Light Pollution and Dark-Sky Harm

The appellant states that the area is not devoid of residential lighting. Again, the Parish Council would like to point out that whilst Church Field does have houses that emit light, the common land is indeed devoid of light. The appeal proposal would introduce for the first time along the common:

First floor living areas

A second storey with no natural screening

A swimming pool with associated lighting

The appeal statement relies heavily on mitigation measures such as low-transmittance glazing, blackout blinds and louvres the act of which is an admission of impact.

We do not consider these mitigations to be credible or enforceable.

The potential for light pollution from the extensive glazing on the first floor is very high.

The appellant's claim that the baseline lighting environment is already "domestic" again ignores the fact that the appeal site edges an exceptionally dark and rural protected landscape. The introduction of first-floor living spaces with large glazed openings – not seen anywhere else around the common will inevitably increase light spill and harm the sensitive ecology.

Blackout blinds cannot be conditioned in any meaningful way and occupant behaviour in a house clearly designed to embrace views cannot be regulated.

By day the heavy reliance on privacy glass will increase bird collision risk.

The appellant's mitigation strategy is therefore inadequate.

The Appellant's Ecological Assessment Is Insufficient

The appeal statement asserts that ecological impacts are minimal. We strongly disagree.

The site lies adjacent to the SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations. The appeal statement ignores all of this.

The appellant's dismissal of ecological risk is not supported by evidence. The proposal introduces:

- Increased light

- Increased noise

- Increased human activity

- A substantial intensification of built form

All of which will cause harm sensitive habitats.

The Appellant Ignores Local Housing Need

The appellant claims the proposal provides a "much needed" home.

This is directly contradicted by the Parish Plan.

The stock of bungalows and reasonably sized properties is being eroded causing stresses within the housing market.

Replacing a modest three-bedroom bungalow with a large five-bedroom dwelling worsens this imbalance and undermines the sustainability of the village.

The Appellant's Policy Analysis Is Selective and Incomplete

The appellant argues that the proposal complies with the Local Plan.

We do not agree.

Based on our assessment, the proposal conflicts with:

SCLP10.4 – failure to protect or enhance the special qualities of the landscape

SCLP10.1 – harm to settlement character

SCLP11.1 – inappropriate scale, form, materials and design

SCLP11.2 – unacceptable harm to residential amenity

This application breaches local Policy 10.4 in that its scale and form neither protect nor enhance the special qualities of the landscape around it. In fact they will be damaging.

The appellant's appeal statement does not overcome these conflicts.

Conclusion

Walberswick Parish Council accept the principle of replacement dwelling for this site. However, we have set out clearly where there is evidence of unacceptable harm. We therefore remain firmly of the view that this proposal represents an unacceptable intensification of development in one of the most sensitive parts of the village. The appellant's Planning Appeal Statement does not provide convincing evidence that the harms identified by East Suffolk Council planning committee— and by WPC — have been addressed or mitigated.

The proposal:

Is substantially larger and more intrusive than the existing dwelling

Harms the rural edge and landscape setting

Introduces unacceptable overlooking and light pollution

Fails to respect local character or materials

Undermines local housing need

Conflicts with multiple Local Plan policies

For these reasons, **we respectfully request that the appeal be dismissed.**