

Walberswick Parish Council response to Application DC/26/1581/FUL – Dunwich Bay House, Stocks Lane

Walberswick Parish Council objects to this application on the basis of scale, design, landscape impact, light pollution, amenity, and insufficient clarity of submitted information.

Context

Stocks Lane is a narrow, semi-rural lane on the eastern edge of development in Walberswick village, forming part of the transition between the built village and the Suffolk & Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape. Its character is defined by open frontages, low boundary treatments, and well-spaced dwellings that sit in large gardens quietly separated within a soft, vegetated setting.

The lane has very limited artificial lighting only from the existing - mostly traditional style residential properties - and retains strong dark-sky qualities, contributing to the tranquillity of the National Landscape. Because of its openness and proximity to the protected coastal environment, Stocks Lane is highly sensitive to increased bulk, enclosure, and light spill.

Development here is expected to remain subordinate and unobtrusive, in line with SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character) and SCLP11.1 (Design Quality).

Design and Appearance

The proposal represents a substantial intensification of built form on a sensitive plot. The floorspace increases from 220m² to 328m², a rise of approximately 50%, and the footprint is extended significantly to the east with a large flat-roofed ground-floor addition and a balcony above.

The proposed increased roof height combined with the new balcony at the eastern end, results in a building that is materially larger, bulkier and visually dominates this part of the lane. Plot coverage is also increased to the point where the proposed building would sit very close to the northern boundary, eroding the spaciousness that characterises this part of the village.

This level of enlargement conflicts with SCLP11.1 (Design Quality) and SCLP11.2 (Residential Extensions), both of which require extensions to be proportionate, subordinate and respectful of the character of the host dwelling and its setting.

Walberswick has experienced a pattern of very large replacement dwellings and substantial extensions, often resulting in the erosion of the village's modest, low-key coastal character.

Although the applicant intends the design to "improve" the current form, the shift from brick to extensive timber boarding, the enlarged massing, and the introduction of a

balcony and raised roofline – none of which reflects the traditional local vernacular – results in a design overly visually assertive rather than sympathetic.

The development fails to respect the established character of the area and does not respond positively to local distinctiveness, contrary to SCLP11.1 and SCLP10.1 (Heritage and Local Character).

Environmental Impact

The proposal nearly doubles the amount of glazing, from 40.9m² to 73.1m². This is a material change with clear implications for light spill, night-time visibility, and impact on the National Landscape.

No credible or enforceable lighting mitigation strategy is provided. It is unclear whether the applicant proposes any meaningful control of internal illumination, external lighting, or the effects of the new balcony and raised first-floor openings.

Given the site's proximity to the Suffolk & Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape, and the recognised dark-sky qualities of Walberswick's edges, the proposal risks causing detrimental visual and lighting impacts, contrary to SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character) and the NPPF's requirement to conserve and enhance valued landscapes.

Insufficient Information

It is unclear whether the currently open frontage to Stocks Lane is to be enclosed by new fencing or boundary structures. Any such enclosure would further urbanise the appearance of the site and diminish the open, informal character of this lane. This lack of clarity is itself a concern and indicates that the submitted plans do not allow for a full and proper assessment of visual impact.

Impact on Residential Amenity

The raised roof height and new balcony introduce additional overlooking potential and elevated activity at first-floor level. These changes are likely to affect neighbouring amenity, contrary to SCLP11.2, which requires extensions to avoid harmful overlooking, dominance or loss of privacy.

Conclusion

The proposal results in a dwelling that is substantially larger, taller, more heavily glazed, and more visually intrusive than the existing building. It would contribute to the ongoing pattern of over-enlargement in Walberswick, increase light spill into a sensitive landscape, and erode both local character and residential amenity.

For these reasons, the development is contrary to SCLP10.1, SCLP10.4, SCLP11.1 and SCLP11.2, and fails to meet the NPPF's requirements to conserve landscape character and ensure high standards of amenity.

The opinion of Walbe rswick Parish Council is therefore that the application should therefore be REFUSED.

Walberswick Parish Council Planning Response

DC/26/1228/FUL

"Creation of new driveway to provide 5 no. parking spaces, new greenhouse and timber clad Garden Studio"

Green Gates, The Street, Walberswick, Southwold, Suffolk, IP18 6UH

04.06.26

1. Opinion

The application can be **approved**, subject to the inclusion of conditions on consideration of the comments contained in section 3 below.

2. Description

The application contains details of the location, size, and construction of:

- A timber clad studio building located in the south east corner of the front garden.
- A new greenhouse in the north east corner of the garden.
- A car parking area separated from the front / side garden by a willow fence.
- A new chestnut fence on the inside of an existing hedge which is adjacent to the driveway to Blyth Reach.
- Removal of a number of trees.
- Laying out of seating and dining areas, and more formal garden elements.
- New tree planting.
- Revamped and slightly altered vehicular access to The Street.

It should be noted that Green Gates falls within the Walberswick Conservation Area.

Green Gates is one of the most significant houses in the village. Originally larger, but now split into three parts, it is still imposing (taken as a whole) and is visually prominent given its height. Permission was given for a significant renovation and alterations, now largely complete. This application covers the garden area and the changes to it.

3. Comment

Given that Green Gates is within the Conservation Area particular attention is given to the content of Local Plan policy SCLP 11.5, and the following clauses are of relevance:

Proposals for development within a Conservation Area should:

- a) Demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the conservation area alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance;*
- b) Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area;*
- c) Be of an appropriate design, scale, form, height, massing and position;*
- d) Retain features important to settlement form and pattern such as open spaces, plot divisions, position of dwellings, hierarchy of routes, hierarchy of buildings, and their uses, boundary treatments and gardens; and*
- e) Use high quality materials and methods of construction which complement the character of the area.*

The comments below are made in the context of these requirements.

Trees

The Tree Officer has made a comprehensive response to the proposal noting the removal of five trees, and the potential impacts of physical works to the remaining trees. This seems an appropriate response, and they propose a planning condition reinforcing the need for additional details to be submitted.

Additional tree planting is proposed and this should enhance the site and views of the house once established.

The boundary treatment adjacent to the driveway to Blyth Reach raises an issue. A new chestnut fence is proposed for the inside of the hedge. Whilst this is not itself a problem, it does have the effect of distancing the current hedge from the Green Gates main garden. This could lead to a detrimental effect on the longevity and potential maintenance issues, and thus impacting the character of the Conservation Area. East Suffolk should consider this issue and perhaps condition the long-term treatment and thus quality of the hedge.

Car parking area

There is some concern over the practicability of the shape of the car parking area; the main consideration is the visual effect on the Conservation Area, and the highway safety aspects of the entrance on to The Street. There is little visual change to the 'old' boundary treatment and the proposed 'new'. There is still a timber fence along the roadside, with trees and shrubs behind it. Visibility from the entrance is / always has been restricted, but SCC Highways have not objected. They do however require a bonded surface to be put in place at the entrance, and wish this to be a condition. Resin bonded gravel is not a natural finish (as is proposed for the rest of the car parking area) but will be required for highway safety reasons, so is unavoidable. The applicants intend to use a match for locally sourced gravel.

Studio building

The position of this building is similar to the previous garage at the property. It is however somewhat larger than the previous garage. However, given the size of the garden area overall it will not appear out of scale. Concern over the impact of the foundations on the adjacent trees and hedge is covered by the conditions proposed.

Materials

The quality of the materials is generally of a high quality, and are complimentary to the situation. They are unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. The charred wood and dark roof of the studio are a considered and appropriate response to a sensitive location.

4. Summary

- In general terms the works proposed will change the perception of Green Gates and public views from The Street, but will not have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area, and in many instances, such as additional tree planting, will enhance it.
- The provisions of Policy SCLP 11.5 are satisfied.
- There is some concern as to the impact of a new fence inside an existing hedge adjacent to the Blyth Reach driveway. East Suffolk are asked to consider how to protect this feature in the longer term – loss of this hedge would alter the character of the approach drive to Blyth Reach and harm the rural quality of the Conservation Area.
- The materials proposed are of an appropriate type and quality for the location.
- There is some concern about the protection of trees / roots from the works but this is proposed to be conditioned, and this is supported.
- The driveway entrance is largely unchanged, but the SCC Highways require a bonded surface adjacent to The Street. This is also proposed to be conditioned.