

## Planning Advisory Group: Report to Walberswick Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/20/0518/FUL

The Heritage Hut, The Green, Walberswick, Suffolk, IP18 6TT

New disabled access porch. 'Graded' Breedon limestone/clay 'dished'-area in front of the hut and part adjoining shop. New traditional painted timber fence to entrance and side as historical photographs.

### 1 Opinion

In the opinion of the PAG, the application should be refused

### 2 Description

The Heritage Hut, as detailed within the Level 2 Heritage Appraisal submitted with the application, is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century former Congregational Chapel, probably designed and supplied by the Norwich firm of Boulton & Paul. The structure is prominently located and occupies a highly sensitive site within the Walberswick Conservation Area.

The Walberswick Conservation Area appraisal (2013) identifies the structure as an 'unlisted building that contributes positively to the conservation area'. Located to the immediate north east is the village green, which is identified as 'an important open/green space'. Within close proximity to the south west is the GDII listed Parish Lantern.

The conservation area appraisal identifies a key view from Ferry Road looking south west towards the green and The Heritage Hut.

In the opinion of the PAG this building meets ESC criteria for 'non-designated heritage asset' status and requests that the opinion of the Conservation Officer is sought regarding the proposal as part of the consultation process.

2.1 PAG welcomes the removal of the existing shingle / pebble surface and replacement with Breedon gravel, although the area (including access from the road and towards other commercial premises) should be thought of as a whole to avoid a piecemeal and unfinished aesthetic.

The edging to the Breedon gravel is stated as being '150mm wide gravel drainage edge'. This will define the edge rather harshly and would be better as grass directly abutting the surface for a softer and less formal appearance. Further information regarding existing and proposed site levels, grading and permeability of the surface material would help better understand the impact of the proposal.

2.2 The Heritage Appraisal cites examples of similar structures built with a porch. However, the example in Walberswick is not one of them. The road facing elevation of The Hut is remarkably intact, and the proposed porch is an unnecessary change to a prominent and well-preserved structure. The PAG do not consider the addition of a porch would enhance or make a positive contribution to the appearance of the building or the conservation area, and public benefit would be minimal. The Conservation Area (section 10, p20) states that “The addition of porches... facing onto the streetscape should be discouraged”.

2.3 The Heritage Appraisal provides historic photos of the building enclosed by a low fence. However, the current openness of the curtilage to the front and side, which blends into the green, is not seen by the PAG as being deficient. The proposed reinstatement of a painted palisade fence and the creation of a ‘maintained garden area’ is considered to be an unnecessary over-complication of the side elevation and the understated setting of the building. Furthermore, the Conservation Area Appraisal (p20) and the Management Plan (p52) warn about potentially undesirable change caused by ‘balustrades and fences’.

3 One of our members declared an interest and took no part in this report.