

Planning Advisory Group: Report to Walberswick Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/16/1133/FUL
The Old Rectory, The Street, Walberswick, IP18 6UN

7.04.2016

1 The application relates to the construction of a two storey, four bedroom house in the rear garden of The Old Rectory, together with a cart shed for two cars with storage above, and a new vehicular access to both properties from The Street.

The site borders the churchyard of St Andrews, a Grade 1 Listed Building, (erroneously described as Grade 2 in the application), and is within the Walberswick Conservation Area. Development of the rear garden is subject to the conditions of policy DM7 of the Local Plan 'Infilling and Back land Development within Physical Limits Boundaries' and the advice and recommendations of the Conservation Area Appraisal, approved by SCDC in December 2013 and registered as a Supplementary Planning Document.

The garden of the Old Rectory contributes significantly to the tranquillity and spaciousness of the churchyard and to the setting of the church. Very visible from the churchyard looking east, the garden and its trees can also be seen from The Street, viewed diagonally across the churchyard from the southwest and behind the single storey extension to the Old Rectory.

2 The house proposed is square in plan with an open central courtyard. The ground floor incorporates a substantial living room and a large music room. At first floor, the roof is pitched at 55 degrees with low external eaves, creating a series of attic bedrooms.

The footprint is given as 148m², including the courtyard, with an overall floor area of 218m², discounting any first floor space with headroom less than 2.1m. (Normal practice is to discount floor space with headroom less than 1.5m) The lack of dimensional information on the drawings makes it difficult to check these areas and other key relationships including the height of the eaves and ridge, the location of the building in respect of boundaries and its distance from the eastern ruins of the church.

The application contains no elevational or sectional drawings showing the proposed house in relation to the church or the surrounding houses. However, it is clear from the drawings that the steep pitched form of the roof and the extent of the floor area will result in a substantial and prominent building.

The proposed materials include plain red clay roof tiles and timber windows with metal casements. The external walls will be finished in flint cobbles with red brick dressings 'to resonate with the church and the ruins to the west' (Design and Access Statement para 3.2). The idea is misguided, given the disparity in age, scale and quality of the two buildings and will only serve to emphasise the

prominence of the new development. Otherwise the architecture seems a motley collection of historicist motifs.

The proposed access to the new house will extend along the eastern boundary of the site from a new opening in the hedge fronting The Street. The existing entrance will be replanted. The hedge is tall and makes an important contribution to the character of The Street in this locality. A section will be lowered from its current height of +2m to 900mm above road level to accommodate the required sightlines. These are not indicated on the plan. The new drive will pass between two large, mature trees which may obstruct sightlines.

No information has been provided regarding the construction of the cart shed. The size of the forecourt does not seem adequate to allow vehicles to turn easily through 360 degrees.

4 The Local Plan states that new development within a Conservation Area should 'maintain and enhance the quality of the distinctive natural and built environment'. Within this context, the Planning Advisory Group comments as follows:

- The proposal is obtrusive in its bulk and form and detrimental to the setting of the church
- The proposal threatens the peaceful character of the churchyard
- The proposal will have a negative impact on surrounding properties
- The necessary access arrangements will have a destructive effect on the character of The Street
- The architectural design does not 'enhance the quality' of the Conservation Area

5 In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group, the development will have a negative impact on a Grade 1 listed building and its surroundings and is in conflict with provisions of the Local Plan:

- Policy DM7 does not allow the subdivision of plots where development would 'reduce residential amenity' or 'result in the erosion of the particular character of the surroundings' nor where a proposal is not 'well related to adjacent properties'.
- Policy DM21 states that 'proposals that comprise poor visual design and layout, or otherwise seriously detract from the character of their surroundings will not be permitted.'
- Policy DM23 states that 'When considering the impact of new development on residential amenity, the Council will have regard [amongst other matters] to the resulting physical relationship with other properties'.

On this basis, we consider the proposal to be unacceptable.