

Report from the Planning Advisory Group regarding 'Thrums' Seven Acre Lane

DC/23/1610/FUL | Demolition of existing dwelling, construction of replacement house with associated landscaping | Thrums Seven Acres Lane Walberswick Southwold Suffolk IP18 6UL

PAG Conclusion / Recommendation

PAG suggests that the application be **supported**, subject to a condition which restricts the use of the one bedroomed annexe to be ancillary to the main dwelling and not used as a separate dwelling or holiday let in perpetuity.

1. Introduction

1.1 The property 'Thrums' is a detached chalet style property built c1977 with later additions including dormers, changes to the plan form, garage and rear extension. The house is not listed and is located outside of the boundary of the Walberswick Conservation Area, but lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.2 The property is accessed from Seven Acres Lane, a private track. The majority of houses located on the lane were built during the 1960s and 1970s, with only Box Bush (to the west of Thrums) and the original Saltings (now replaced) in place pre the 1960s.

1.3 The proposal is to replace the existing house with a larger property, built to current building standards, and incorporating natural materials and sustainable heating / cooling methods where possible. The new house has been designed to reflect the local vernacular, specifically the styling of the arts and crafts period; an architectural style that exists in Walberswick with several houses designed by Frank Jennings. The application details suggest that the new house is intended to set a benchmark for traditional design in the village, showcasing local materials and craftsmanship.

2. Comments

1. This proposal continues an unfortunate trend in the village whereby modest dwellings are proposed for demolition and replaced with larger ones. The example next door to Thrums is Blinkers where a significant uplift in floorspace, and plot coverage is seen. This can have a detrimental impact on the form and character of the village over time.

2. In this proposal there is an uplift in floorspace from 154m² to 268m² (a 74% increase), additionally the proposal takes a chalet style dwelling (one and a half storey) to become a two and a half storey house. Notwithstanding this, although there is a widthways extension beyond the existing footprint, the extra floorspace is mostly accounted for in additional height for the additional storey.

3. In terms of massing of the new building, whilst it is larger and wider, this should be seen in the context of the street scene and the removal of the existing double garage adjacent to Seven Acre Lane. The new property will appear further south (away from the road) on the plot and not be overly intrusive in the street scene despite being larger. The tall chimneys add to the impression of height, but are clearly part of the holistic design.

4. Significant emphasis is placed on the design ethos for the new dwelling, and the positive influence of the Jennings legacy in the village. The designer should be complemented on a proposal which provides a handsome new dwelling, particularly complementing the existing Box Bush next door.

5. The materials palette is particularly sensitive and the use of lime render and traditional windows will add to the low key appearance of the dwelling.

6. The proposal includes what is called a one bedroomed annexe, although this is physically integrated into the building. It does have a separate entrance, but is also accessible from the sitting room of the main house. It would be appropriate to condition that this annexe should not be let separately from the main house.

7. The applicant has sought pre-application advice from the District Council prior to submission. Extracts are quoted in the Design and Access statement. East Suffolk Council are supportive of the proposal, and complementary about the design quality and materials palette. They comment that:

“In terms of scale, the replacement dwelling would be 2.5 storeys, but based on the massing model, the roofline of the replacement dwelling would incorporate varied ridge heights, steep roof pitched and overhanging eaves, which helps to minimise the increased scale, bulk and massing of the replacement dwelling, and creates a varied and characterful roofline”.

They also pick up on the annexe proposal and suggest that:

The proposed annexe accommodation would be subject to a planning condition to restrict its occupancy to the host dwelling, that would prevent its use as a separate dwelling or holiday let”.

Overall, the ESC view at the pre-app stage is that:

“In summary, the principle of a replacement dwelling of the design quality proposed, would be supported in this sensitive location”.

Whilst it is for the WPC to make it's own conclusion on the proposal it is interesting to read such a strong officer endorsement of the draft application. On this occasion PAG is in agreement with the view.

3. Relevant Local Plan policies

3.1 The following policies are particularly relevant to the proposal, however there are no significant outstanding issues arising in considering the detailed clauses of the policies.

Policy SCLP11.1: Design Quality

Policy SCLP11.2: Residential Amenity

4. Summary

- This is a significant application providing for a large house replacing a modest 1970's chalet bungalow.
- Notwithstanding the above the proposal is well thought through providing a high quality dwelling designed using principles exemplified in local designs by Frank Jennings.
- It would have a positive effect on the form and character of Seven Acre Lane.
- As the proposal includes an annexe it should be controlled to limit occupancy only in connection with the host dwelling.