

Planning Advisory Group: Report to Walberswick Parish Council

Planning Application ref DC/17/2296/FUL
White Barn, Leveretts Lane, Walberswick IP18 6TS

19.06.2017

1 White Barn is one of several notable houses in the village designed by the Arts and Crafts architect, Frank Jennings. Conspicuously sited on a corner of Leveretts Lane, the house is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as an unlisted building that contributes to the quality of the area. The house is subject to on-going restoration and alteration.

The garden of White Barn has an extensive frontage to Leveretts Lane which, until recently, was screened by the characteristic hedges and trees described in the Appraisal. These have now been cleared and replaced with very visible chain link and close boarded timber fencing, to the detriment of the special quality of the lane.

The character of the lane has also been eroded by the destruction of the interesting stepped entrance to White Barn, illustrated in the Appraisal and the Historic Assessment Report previously submitted by the applicant. Its replacement by a sheet metal gate flanked by tall brick pillars surmounted by urns is alien to the unpretentious atmosphere of the lane.

2 Following the refusal on appeal of a proposed two storey extension to White Barn, a revised application has now been submitted for a single storey studio extension with shower and utility rooms. Unlike the previous application, which sited the extension parallel to Leveretts Lane, the new proposal aligns the building with the existing house, extending towards the lane at an oblique angle.

The new scheme will be constructed of what is described as 'brickwork dressed flint cobble walls' together with plain tiled roofs, and oak framed windows with steel casements. The west facing terrace will be covered by translucent polycarbonate sheeting.

3 The reduction in the area and volume of the extension and its revised siting will result in a less obtrusive development. However, no elevational drawings have been provided to show the two buildings in relation to each other or their surroundings, and it is not possible to assess fully the impact of the proposal on the existing house or the local environment.

The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application refers to the proposed 'brickwork dressed flint cobble walls [as] resonant with the materials and details used by Frank Jennings in the houses of this period'. The statement is not true of White Barn nor Jennings's other Walberswick designs. The proposal is at odds with the context and does not comply with the requirements of policy DM21 of the Local Plan regarding the choice of materials for extensions to significant buildings.

The Design and Access Statement also refers to the importance of planting 'to maintain privacy and tune the house into the landscape' but makes no proposals either for the garden (except an ivy screen to the oil tank) or for the boundary with Leveretts Lane, where screening and tuning are most needed. The shrubs planted along the bank are small in scale and ineffectual in screening the fences.

Leveretts Lane, where screening and tuning are most needed. The shrubs planted along the bank are small in scale and ineffectual in screening the fences.

4 In the opinion of the Planning Advisory Group, the following issues should be addressed before the application can be determined:

- Drawings are required showing in full the elevations of the new building and the existing and the relationship between them and their surroundings
- The proposed walling of dressed flint cobble should be replaced by materials and finishes that reflect the appearance of the existing house.
- The polycarbonate sheeting specified for the roof of the covered terrace is not an appropriate material for use in the Conservation Area and is not consistent with the quality of the materials specified elsewhere in the project.
- Landscape proposals are required to screen the fencing along the boundary with Leveretts Lane and to restore the bank to its former appearance.

Consideration should be given to reducing the height of the brick piers at the new pedestrian entrance and replacing the inappropriately designed metal gate.