

18 July 2011

Your ref: 11/00716

Mr Nicholas J Ward
Chief Planning Control Officer
Natural & Built Environment Division
Babergh District Council
Corks Lane
Hadleigh
Suffolk IP7 6SJ

For the attention of: Graham Chamberlain

Dear Mr Ward,

B/11/00716 Replacement dwelling – Knutmill, Scotland Street, Stoke by Nayland

I am writing on behalf of the Suffolk Preservation Society (the Society) to submit our representations regarding the above proposal. The Society asks that the following representations are taken into account by the local planning authority (lpa) when determining the application.

Principle

1. This application is a resubmission of B/10/00646 that was withdrawn following public consultation. The proposals relate to a prominent site with direct street frontage within the conservation area of Stoke by Nayland. The existing building is of neutral significance to the conservation area and consequently no objections are raised in principle to the sympathetic redevelopment of the site. The site is also within the designated AONB and the lpa is reminded that this designation is intended to conserve both the natural environment and cultural heritage of these areas (para.16 PPS5: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide 2010).
2. The application site is also sensitive by reason of the listed vernacular cottages that flank the plot and the inevitable impact of the proposal upon their setting. As you will be aware, the lpa has a statutory duty to preserve both the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings (sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

3. In this case, Scotland Street is a meandering lane with native hedgerows defining the front boundaries of predominantly modest vernacular cottages set behind shallow front gardens. Knutmill is an alien suburban interloper with no architectural significance. In our opinion, an established building line forms part of the essential ingredients that together define the character of the area. Furthermore, unlike the village streets found at the centre of Suffolk villages, Scotland Street has an open grain dominated by green spaces, as opposed to built form. It is essential that these defining characteristics are maintained as part of any redevelopment.

The Proposals

4. The current submission responds in part to the weaknesses identified in the previous scheme. The current submission essentially presents cosmetic changes to the fenestration of the front elevation, form of the porch, the length of the attached single storey range and the form of the garage/studio block set to the rear. The proposed replacement dwelling has been given a vernacular derived fenestration and detailing on the front/side elevations. The chimney now projects in the local vernacular tradition. We welcome this revision. However, the lean-to 'porch' is not within the Suffolk tradition. If this were set to the rear of the house, it would be acceptable. Such additions simply are not found on the front elevation of Suffolk cottages that are typically flat-fronted.

Furthermore, the dwelling is still set more deeply within the plot than is conventional in the immediate locality. To the rear of the cottage is an attached 'service range' with vertically boarded elevations. This has been reduced in length in comparison with the previous scheme. Whilst this represents an improvement upon the former scheme, regrettably in our opinion, it remains of disproportionate length. The proposed detached double garage/car port has also been redesigned, presumably in response to criticisms relating to the bulk and suburban form of the previous scheme. The siting of the block is similar to the previous scheme and set deeply within the plot facing the street frontage. Nevertheless, the handling of the bulk/massing is more effective, with the subdivision of the studio into an independent single storey unit.

Despite these revisions we still have concerns that simply too much development is proposed resulting in an over dominance of built form over green garden space. The removal of the forecourt parking from the scheme does represent an improvement together with the less bulky garage design. It is essential that the driveway/parking areas are restricted to the side and rear of the cottage and a planted garden reinstated to the frontage. In our opinion, the proposed cottage could usefully be moved forward to be set immediately to the rear of the historic building line, in deference to the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. A native hedgerow should also be reinstated to enclose the lane frontage in the established manner.

5. In our opinion, there is still too much built form proposed on this modest site and the garage/studio element should be reduced (or even removed) to a single garage.

6. The current submission does not give adequate consideration to the setting of the listed buildings adjoining or the essential defining characteristics of the conservation area and this is reflected in the Design and Access statement. The submission of a streetscene elevation is welcomed and does assist with the consideration of the contextual compatibility of the proposals. This does not assist with an appreciation of the importance of the building line. Furthermore, there are considerable changes in level from the street frontage to the rear of the plot and this aspect is not explored in the proposals. It is for this reason that the cottages hug the street to maximize the available rear garden areas before the land rises significantly to the south. The elevated area to the south allows clear views to be gained of the rear elevations and development to the rear of the houses addressing the street. In this case, the uncharacteristically long rear range would appear as an alien element. The deletion of the utility/shower room element would resolve this.

7. The proposed cottage-derived dwelling is now more conventional in detail. The proposed plan depth of 6 metres should ideally be reduced to 5.5 m to conform to the established vernacular plan for more modest housing. The rear elevation remains over fenestrated in our view this should be addressed as public views of this elevation may be gained from the public footpath on significantly higher land to the rear. The removal of the large roof light previously proposed on the front elevation and its replacement by a single two-light pent-roofed dormer is welcomed. No large scale details are provided to provide any confidence that the suggested quality will be delivered. We suggest that large scale details (1:5 & full size sections) of the windows (including sills and reveals), eaves, verges, dormers, chimney, boarded cladding, rainwater goods, ridges, doors, plinth etc are provided as part of the application. No beads or bellmouth detailing is essential on the render and a limewash or mineral paint finish should be required by condition.

Conclusions

7. The current proposals do represent an improvement upon the previous submission. Nevertheless, in our opinion significant revisions are still required to satisfy the statutory tests for development in this location. There is still too much development proposed on this constrained site. We submit that the reduction in the size of the outhouses (omitting the studio), is essential and resolution of the other issues (including siting/detail) identified above would significantly enhance the character and appearance of the development in our opinion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Cairns', written in a cursive style.

Simon Cairns

BSc (Hons), Dip TP, Dip Bldg Cons (RICS)

MRTPI IHBC

Director

cc Andora Carver , Babergh SPS Committee

Michael Collins, Conservation Officer, Babergh District Council

David Eking Esq. - The Dedham Vale Society, Stoke by Nayland Parish Council