

WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA - PF/19/2004 - Partial demolition of existing extensions, and addition of new three storey extension to the north and single storey extension to the south. Demolition and re-building of existing outbuildings; replacement windows and refurbishment throughout. New boundary treatment to south facing garden; Croft House, Croft Yard, Wells-next-the-Sea, NR23 1JS for Mr & Mrs Bucke

- Target Date: 10th March 2020

Case Officer: Liz Starling

Householder application

CONSTRAINTS

Landscape Character Area

SFRA - Areas Susceptible to Groundwater Flooding

EA Risk of Flooding from Surface Water 1 in 1000

LDF - Residential Area

LDF - Settlement Boundary

Conservation Area

Unclassified Road

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

IS1/19/0690 - Croft House, Croft Yard, Wells-next-the-Sea, NR23 1JS - Proposed three-storey 'tower' extension to North, single storey kitchen extension to South, re-modelling of existing house and reconfiguring of outbuilding to form car-port - Advice Given (for pre-apps) 09/10/2019

THE APPLICATION

The application seeks full planning permission for extension and alteration works to a property known as Croft House situated on Croft Yard in Wells. The scheme includes the following works;

- Partial demolition of existing extensions and their replacement with a new three storey 'tower' extension to the north (with a curved balcony at second floor).
- Single storey kitchen extension to the south.
- Demolition and re-building of existing attached outbuildings to form a carport and the installation of replacement windows and refurbishment/reconfiguration works to the original property.
- A new boundary treatment around part of south facing garden.

Croft House is a residential property sited within Wells Conservation Area.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

At the request of Councillor P Fisher owing to concerns in respect of compliance with Policies EN2 and EN4, in particular concerns relating to overlooking, density, scale and massing and detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers.

TOWN COUNCIL:

Objection on the grounds that the proposal is considered out of character with the existing building, it is over development and there are serious concerns about the adequacies of car parking and the possible obstruction of Croft Yard.

REPRESENTATIONS:

One public objection has been received on behalf of Manor Cottage, No.2 Croft Yard raising the following concerns:

Whilst raising no objection in principle to the restoration or improvements to the parking arrangements. However, objections raised to the details relating to this proposal as follows;

- Scale of the extensions proposed, increasing accommodation by approximately 40% and resulting in the overdevelopment of the site.
- Impact on existing parking arrangements, which are already cramped and difficult to access. Increase in occupancy of the property would further exasperate issues of parking, access and safety at the site and in the immediate vicinity. request that NCC highways are consulted on the proposals.
- Detrimental impact on nearby properties on Croft Yard, particularly No.2, resulting from increased overlooking and loss of privacy and loss of light.
- Concerns raised that information such as house numbering and imagery are misleading and do not represent the potential impacts of the proposals on amenity and the access road and parking.

Further correspondence has been received from the above objecting raising concerns in respect of NCC Highways response not adequately addressing the highway issues, clarification over highway works proposed and raising further concerns in respect of the impact of the tower element upon residential amenity.

Conservation and Design Officer – No objections subject to the imposition of conditions.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the proposed development may raise issues relevant to

Article 8: The Right to respect for private and family life.

Article 1 of the First Protocol: The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

Having considered the likely impact on an individual's Human Rights, and the general interest of the public, approval of this application as recommended is considered to be justified, proportionate and in accordance with planning law.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 - SECTION 17

The application raises no significant crime and disorder issues.

POLICIES

North Norfolk Core Strategy (Adopted September 2008):

SS 1 - Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk

SS 4 - Environment

SS 14 - Wells-next-the-Sea

EN 1 - Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and The Broads

EN 2 - Protection and enhancement of landscape and settlement character

EN 4 - Design

EN 8 - Protecting and enhancing the historic environment

EN 9 - Biodiversity and geology

EN 10 – Development and Flood risk

EN 13 - Pollution and hazard prevention and minimisation

CT 5 - The transport impact of new development

CT 6 - Parking provision

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places (paragraphs 124, 127, 128, 130)

Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (paragraphs 189, 190, 192, 193, 194, 196, 199)

MAIN ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Principle
2. Design and impact on heritage asset
3. Residential amenity
4. Landscape, biodiversity and impact upon the AONB
5. Highways

APPRAISAL

1. Principle (Policies SS 1 and SS 14):

The application site lies within the defined residential policy area of Wells where under Policies SS 1 and SS 14, extensions to dwellings are acceptable in principle subject to compliance with all relevant Core Strategy policies.

2. Design and impact on heritage asset (Policies EN 4 and EN 8)

Policy EN 4 states that to be considered acceptable, all development must be designed to a high quality, reinforcing local distinctiveness. Design which fails to have regard to local context and does not preserve or enhance the character and quality of an area will not be acceptable.

The site also lies in a Wells Conservation Area where Policy EN 8 requires development proposals, to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of designated assets and their settings through high quality, sensitive design. Development that would have an adverse impact on their special historic or architectural interest will not be permitted.

Concerns have been raised by the Town Council and the public to the proposals on the basis that they constitute overdevelopment of the site and would out of character with the existing building.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the Council's Conservation Officer, whilst acknowledging that the proposals comprise a "*relatively interventionist scheme*" which has understandably drawn concerns locally, recognises that Croft House has been heavily altered and extended over time and is now something of a compromised hybrid.

Assessing the scheme, the Conservation Officer recognised that the proposals would undoubtedly have a significant impact upon appearance of character, with the south side of the property subject to a substantial single-storey extension which would overlay the full width of the elevation, whilst to the north, a 3-storey tower extension added in the alcove between the building's core and the north-facing wing. Whilst the Design and Heritage Statement states that the scheme has been designed to improve circulation up through the building, this results in a powerful structure visually which would come to dominate this side of the property and does not sit particularly comfortably against the aims and objective of the Design Guide; i.e. which normally requires extensions to be subordinate.

However, it is recognised that within the design guide requirements, there is an inherent assumption that the host building has a character and appearance worthy of preserving. In the case of Croft House, this is considered to be questionable as whilst the property has some remaining quality and features of historic interest, the degree of change already sustained means that it cannot be considered sacrosanct from further adaptation. Indeed, with the right scheme, there is an opportunity to revisit the ad hoc changes to deliver an improved and planned scheme that seeks to rationalise and enhance.

In this regard, it is considered that the proposed tower extension, as a piece of design, is appealing and striking in equal measure and could provide an attractive counterpoint to The Roundhouse behind. Particularly having secured improvements to its form and design (in order to promote a greater degree of subservience), it can be argued that this element of the scheme would 'lift' the northern elevation by providing additional visual interest.

The proposed single-storey kitchen extension, with its edged roof and outward projection, whilst less appealing in design terms, would however with the design amendments secured, 'plug' more sympathetically into the existing building and replace the existing unfortunate flat roof porch. Combined with the replacement/removal of the existing inappropriate fenestration on this side of the property as proposed, it is not considered that this element of the scheme would result in real harm being caused to the character and appearance of the host property.

Taken together, Conservation and Design remain unconvinced that the concerns expressed would in practice translate into sustainable grounds for objection. Having carefully weighed up the positive and the negative, it is concluded that the impact of the proposals upon the overall significance of the Wells Conservation Area would be neutral, with a finely balanced recommendation of approval offered.

In respect of the concerns raised that the proposals constitute overdevelopment, Croft House lies within a built up close-knit residential area of Wells, where the property and site are considered sufficient in size to accommodate the level of development proposed. As such, it is not considered that the proposals constitute 'overdevelopment' within this local context.

It is considered that scheme as proposed would be acceptable in terms of its design, scale, siting and form, and subject to conditions in respect of materials/detailing, would not cause significant harm to the Wells Conservation Area in accordance with Policies EN4 and EN8 of the Core Strategy and Sections 12 and 16 (paragraph 196) of the NPPF.

3. Residential Amenity: (Policy EN 4)

Croft House lies within a built up residential area with residential dwellings of varying designed and scales surrounding the site. Policy EN 4 of the Core Strategy states that to be deemed acceptable, schemes need to demonstrate that they would adequately protect the residential amenities of the occupants of existing neighbouring properties, as well as the amenities of future occupants. Concerns have been raised that the scheme as proposed (in particularly the 'tower' extension and the increase in the scale of property due to the extensions proposed) would negatively impact on the amenities of the occupants of nearby properties in respect of overlooking, loss of light, overbearing and noise and disturbance.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the nature of the scheme proposed and the orientation and distances of separation between Croft House and neighbouring properties, is such that it is not considered that the scheme would significantly impact upon the residential amenities of any neighbouring properties in respect of privacy, light, overshadowing or disturbance.

Given that particular concern has been raised to the potential impact of the tower extension upon the privacy of the rear garden area of Manor Cottage (No.2 Croft Yard), the agent has provided additional information to demonstrate the level of potential overlooking resulting from the proposed tower extension element and states that the scheme reduces the number of windows which already look towards No. 2 and that the garden area of this property is already directly overlooked by windows on the property to the south (No.3). Whilst it is acknowledged that the second floor balcony element of the tower extension would result in a level and perception of overlooking to the garden of No.2, given the current window positioning and relationships between the host and neighbouring property, the presence of Croft Yard which passes between the properties (helping to mitigate against any overbearing impacts and the fact that the garden of No.2 is already overlooked by the property to south, it is difficult to justify that the level of overlooking would be at such a 'significant' level to justify the refusal of the application on the grounds of residential amenity(Policy EN4).

Furthermore, it is also considered that the scheme would not result in the overdevelopment of the site, and that adequate amenity and parking areas would be retained to serve the future occupants of the property in compliance with Policy EN4 of the Core Strategy.

4. Landscape, ecology and impact upon the AONB: (Policies SS4, EN1, EN2 and EN9)

The scheme has been assessed by the Council's Landscape Officer who having negotiated alterations to the garden boundary treatment at the pre-application stage, and on the basis that the existing trees are retained, raises no objections on the grounds of trees, landscape or ecology.

However, in order to minimise light pollution in this sensitive landscape of the Norfolk Coast AONB and Wells Conservation Area, a condition to control external lighting has been requested which would be attached to any permission.

Furthermore, the nature of the development proposed, along with the context of the surrounding area, would not cause harm to the special qualities of the North Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

On this basis, it is considered that the scheme would comply with Policies SS4, EN 1, EN2 and EN9 of the Core Strategy and Section 15 of the NPPF.

5. Highways: (Policy CT 5 and CT 6)

Concerns have been raised that the proposals would increase the occupancy levels of the property which would negatively impact on the existing parking arrangements which are already cramped and would exacerbate existing access and highway safety issues associated with Croft Yard. Given the concerns raised, NCC highways were consulted.

The site is slightly removed from the adopted road network, accessed over an unmade private route with a Public Right of Way 'on foot' only (Wells N-T-S FP9), with, unusually, the constructed footpath to the north being predominantly privately maintained.

Notwithstanding this, NCC Highways note that whilst the property is to be enlarged, it remains a single dwelling, so, in relation to highway considerations, there would not be any substantive increase in vehicle movements associated with the development.

A rearrangement of the internal walls provides an increase in off street parking provision, which would be beneficial, given the restricted nature of the frontage area and it is noted that a temporary access and compound are to be formed to the south of the property, reducing any impact over the unmade Croft Yard, subject to the necessary agreements.

Whilst there may be some local disruption during building work, given the restricted access to the site, this would be temporary and cease upon completion. There has been consideration of this, with mitigation measures proposed in the scheme to ease potential impacts, which would be secured by an appropriately worded condition.

On the basis of no highway objection being raised, it is considered that the scheme would safeguard highway safety in accordance with Policies CT5 and CT6.

6. Conclusion

It is concluded that the proposed extensions and alterations are acceptable in terms of their design, scale, siting and appearance and would not cause significant detriment to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the designated heritage asset (in this case the Wells Conservation Area) or the special qualities of the AONB. The scheme is also not considered to result in significant detriment to the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, would safeguard highway safety and raise no landscape or ecology concerns.

The development is considered to accord with the requirements of the development plan and approval of the application is therefore recommended.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE subject to conditions relating to the following matters and any others considered necessary by the Head of Planning.

- Time limit for implementation
- Approved plans
- Materials details
- External lighting
- Highway conditions

Final wording of conditions to be delegated to the Head of Planning.