

Combroke Parish Council

Consultation for Planning Application 16/03397/FUL

Proposal: relocation of vehicular access and associated landscaping

at: No 14, Combrook, CV35 9HP

The Parish Council discussed this application at its meeting on 21 November 2016. A factual presentation of the scheme was given, after which residents present were invited to ask questions for clarification and make any relevant planning comments about the scheme.

Representation

The Parish Council is objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:

- ◆ the application is incomplete and elements of the application statement, the design and access statement, and drawings are misleading;
- ◆ the proposed drawings indicate a car in the garage section of the outbuilding. The Design and Access statement suggests that the existing vehicular access is not suitable now this outbuilding has been constructed. This representation of a garage is misleading. The reality is the applicant has breached the approved permissions 15/00443/FUL and 15/00446/LBC and constructed something entirely different¹ -the current building appears to be a separate² purpose built living unit with the garage doors as a false facade.
- ◆ the proposal does not meet the requirement of the Core Strategy Policy to protect and enhance the historic environment (CS. 8). No 14 is a listed building within a prominent position at the centre of the Conservation Area. The proposal lacks sensitivity to the character of this listed building, the adjacent listed buildings and Conservation Area;
- ◆ the proposal is contrary to the Core Strategy Policy for Design and Distinctiveness (CS. 9); and,
- ◆ this proposal contravenes the Feldon Parkland Management Recommendations (CS. 5 and CS.12)

1. Heritage

- 1.1. Combrook is located within the Feldon Parkland Special Landscape Area (Core Strategy Policy 12.) One of the key management recommendation relevant to this application is:
Conserve settlement character by restricting development to that which reflects the vernacular style, scale, pattern and materials.
(Special Landscape Area Study - June 2012 paragraph 8.6)
- 1.2. No 14 occupies a central plot within the village. Nos 12 and 14 together (previously known as 12, 13 and 14) are a single late C17 building and described as a '*good example of a C17 local type of cottage*' in the SDC Conservation Area Study (1994). This Grade II Listed building forms a group with the two early C18 dwellings either side, roughly

¹ The Authority's Enforcement Team has confirmed the breach of permission which is not yet resolved.

² SDC Extending your Home 4.12 is clear that ancillary living accommodation should not be self contained and separate from the main dwelling

equidistant and also both Grade II Listed. Across the lane are examples of Victorian Estate cottages in the Gothic style attributed to Gibson. Together with the Church, this location within the village centre is identified as an Area of Special Character within the Conservation Area of Combrook (designated from 1972).

- 1.3. Given the above, the Parish Council requests that a full appraisal of the proposals be carried out by the District Council's Conservation Officer.

It is noted that in their letter responding to 15/00446/LBC, English Heritage also recommend that such material change as this should be determined in accordance with: *national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your expert conservation advice.*

2. **Incomplete and Misleading Application**

- 2.1. Please note the applicant has made reference to 14/02268/FUL and 14/02271/LBC. These permissions are for the refurbishment of the main dwelling and replacement of its extensions. The applications for the approved outbuilding as a garage and workshop **with its associated parking and landscaping** are 15/00443/FUL and 15/00446/LBC with a non-material amendment 15/03913/AMD permitting 2 additional windows in the garage.
- 2.2. The heritage statement submitted relates to the application in 2014 for which the development planned for the side garden area were significantly amended as a result of consultees raising concern, including English Heritage and the Planning Authority's Conservation Officer. Even this original scheme retained the existing access and driveway from the lane, maintaining the open frontage to the side garden land. The historical summary provided for the property and location remains relevant. However there is no statement addressing the impact of the now proposed change of access and associated landscaping to demonstrate how these 2016 proposals will protect and enhance the setting of both 14 itself and the wider setting of neighbouring listed properties as well as the Conservation Area.
- 2.3. These plans indicate a significant change in levels and the associated landscaping, including substantial retaining walls across the side garden land. Given the sensitivity of the site, the Parish Council is of the view that elevation and section plans for the proposed landscaping should be provided as part of the consultation.
- 2.4. The Design and Access statement makes a casual reference to gates at the new access - but there is no specification for the gates nor an elevation within the plans.
- 2.5. The description in the Design and Access statement makes several references to the scheme addressing the management of surface water flooding. In this context the Parish Council believes the application requires a detailed drainage scheme with: associated flood risk assessments; plans detailing how the proposed scheme will address the identified flood risk; together with any relevant consents from the Local Lead Flood Authority with regard to outflow into the stream. The issue of surface water flooding is addressed further at section 5 below.
- 2.6. There are significant inconsistencies between the approved plan and the proposed plan. The approved plan 15/00443/FUL shows the garage floor level and the level parking area both at 98.90m, 14/02268/FUL also shows the same level. This proposed plan indicates a **400mm difference**. The plan indicates the level parking area will be 98.50m,

i.e 400mm lower which is a significant difference, and it shows a garage floor level at 98.57m. It is noted that the entrance to the main dwelling remains at 99.30m. If Officers are minded to approve this application, **clarification is required about these data before the application is determined.**

2.7. Finally the proposed drawings indicate the car in the garage, which does not reflect what has been currently built following a breach of the approved permissions.

3. **Impact on the Conservation Area and on the setting of a Listed Building CS. 8**

3.1. The approved permission for 15/00443/FUL set the new garage building well back from the boundary with the lane and also preserved a tranche of open green space on the north side. It retained the existing access and driveway from the lane, maintaining the open frontage to the side garden land. These features of the proposals were very much welcomed by the Parish Council at the time.

3.2. The side garden area, previously a completely open space including some fruit trees, makes an important contribution to the character of this location which is an Area of Special Character. The Applicant's Heritage statement also notes at page 19, that the garden land and listed building are a significant view within the Conservation Area.

3.3. This proposal to change the access introduces an unwelcome urbanisation with the vehicle entrance, driveway and parking spread across the whole width of the side garden land. It requires extensive landscaping with higher retaining walls given the proposed lower surface levels for parking. This scheme fails to enhance or protect the setting of the listed building(s) and this Area of Character at the centre of the Conservation Area.

3.4. With regard to the proposal to introduce low stone walling to the boundary with the lane, the Parish Council has been made aware that previously the Conservation Officer³ has advised several residents that such walling **was not recommended as a boundary treatment**. The introduction of this type of low stone walling to dwellings -at Wheelwright for example - is a 20C addition. Early photographs depict picket fencing and hedging and the District Council's Design Guide illustrates the use of estate railings with an example from Combrook.

3.5. The section of boundary walling extending across *one third* of the original 17C building is an additional concern. The applicant's heritage statement identifies that the original building would have been a single dwelling and the conversion to 3 cottages was thought to have taken place in the 18C. In this context the Parish Council would be pleased to hear the expert views of the Conservation Officer as to whether it is advisable to create separate boundary treatments across the main building.

4. **Core Strategy Policy 9 Design & Distinctiveness**

4.1. The Design and Access statement for the application provides a photo of the existing access and drive and suggests that *"the driveway surface is poor and pavement crossing would be better located away from the cottage to avoid clashing with pedestrians"*. First, the daily volume of pedestrian traffic on Combrook pavements is probably in single figures; and the relocated access must cross the pavement as well -with the same very

³ The Conservation Officer was Allen Firth at that time

tiny possibility of clashing with pedestrians. Second, it is clear the existing driveway would benefit from being resurfaced, however the basic foundations are in place. The following SDC Design Guide statements are pertinent:

3.3.14 As far as possible, existing built resources should be re-used and adapted with as little change as necessary.

7.5.5 If parking is accommodated within the plot, it should be placed within, beside or behind the plan outline of the main building.

Also relevant to this application:

3.3.8 Development should be adapted to the site not the site to the development.

7.5.4 Parked cars should not visually dominate development.

- 4.2. On the matter of the suitability of relocating the access, the applicant is already aware of the County Highways advice. A letter dated 30 September 2014 was written by the Architect to the planning department and included the statement below.

PARKING AREA

Highways have said they would prefer the pavement crossing to remain where it is, and that there should be adequate parking off road for two cars. I have reduced the parking area to the minimum I think will be practical.

- 4.3. And on the subject of the telegraph pole, Building for Life 12⁴ (p 10) suggests that such features encourage drivers to approach their street and home more cautiously and responsibly. And similarly when leaving the property.
- 4.4. The Design Guide is clear the parking for two vehicles should be at the side of the main building, with the presumption that access and driveways are also to the side. This is the existing arrangement for No14.
- 4.5. In the main, parking in Combrook is discrete. Where older listed properties have a driveway, the access and drive is adjacent the side of the main building, as with No 12 and Wheelwright. The exception is Quince Corner, with its courtyard plan the main building is at a right angle to the street and its side wall directly abuts the pavement.
- 4.6. Building for Life 12 (p 11) reinforces the view that vehicle domination should be avoided. This proposed scheme for access/parking, as an alternative to that approved in 15/00443FUL completely engulfs the full width of this side garden land. It is an unnecessary and damaging amendment with very little difference in the "parking area" achieved. Refer to Fig 1 attached.
- 4.7. The plan describe the retaining walls as "low wall", as proposed for the boundary. The given levels on the plan indicate otherwise, the data given indicate a drop of 1.5m from the lane to the "level parking area". This five foot drop will require very significant landscaping and retaining walls will be much higher than the "low wall" suggested. This will substantially change the character of this plot in relation to both the listed buildings and this prominent location in the village. In place of a grassy slope is a piece of extensive hard landscaping more commonly found in urban areas.

⁴ guidance recommended in CS 9

4.8. The application does not meet the requirements of CS. 9: *'development will enhance the sense of place, reflecting the character and distinctiveness of the locality'*.

5. Surface water flooding

- 5.1. The application makes refers to addressing the management of surface water. However it simply gives snippets; for example, "*the proposed walls will help in the management of surface water collection*" ~how will this be achieved? Or "*the drainage channels will connect with the culvert*" ~but this connection is not indicated on the plans.
- 5.2. Drainage channels can be inserted independently of any access arrangement. The proposed relocation of the vehicular access is not required to facilitate surface water drainage. In fact the opposite: this proposal involves constructing more new surfacing over land which is currently green space and which provides a natural permeable area for the management of surface water. Furthermore, a new access requires 5m of bound surface which is impermeable and this will increase the rate of surface water run off.
- 5.3. The purpose of the new boundary walling appears to be to deflect surface water away from the boundary ~ in severe conditions this might cause a backwash that might harm adjacent properties. Whereas currently the open garden land serves as a catchment.
- 5.4. Scrutiny of Environment Agency mapping⁵ for surface water flooding risk identifies this side garden land area as a natural catchment at high risk of surface water flooding in extreme rainfall. The culvert and ditch is evidence of the centuries old management of the flow of surface water across this land. The ditch which is now eroding and overgrown has an outflow into the stream. Longstanding residents remember a previous occupant at No 14 keeping ditches across the side garden land well dug and cleared.
- 5.5. Surface water arising on the lane at this location is collected into road gullies that discharge into the above mentioned culvert. In March 2016 during some of the heaviest rainfall in Warwickshire in a century⁶, flooding occurred across the lane. It is not known whether this failure was a result of a blockage in the road gullies / culvert or ditch or an inherent incapacity in the system in extreme conditions.⁷
- 5.6. In the view of the Parish Council, it would not be appropriate to approve this application on the basis that it is a response to a flooding concern. That would require an expert appraisal, with a full assessment of the known surface water patterns, and a proper drainage plan with any relevant consents from the LLFA.

For all the above reasons the Parish Council objects to this application.
December 2016

⁵ Environment Agency online mapping : <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/map?eastings=430693&northings=251663&address=10023580626&map=SurfaceWater>

⁶ WCC Flood Risk Management Newsletter Summer 2016

⁷ The Parish Council has raised a request with the County Highways Team to ensure these gullies are properly cleaned and jetted and also to check, in consultation with the relevant landowners, that the existing culverts /ditches have the capacity to receive the outflow from the gullies in extreme rain. Further advice will be sought from the LLFA as necessary.

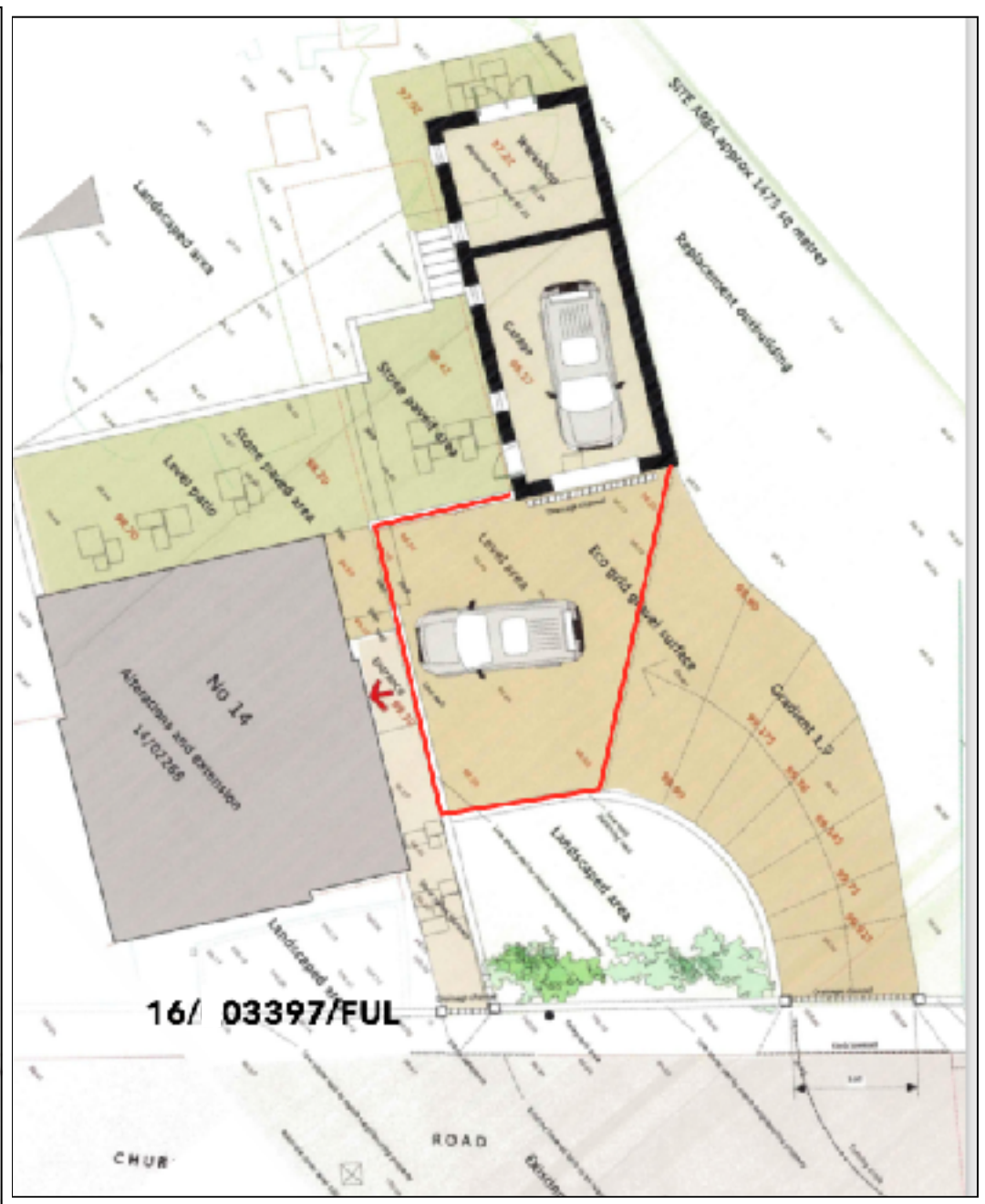
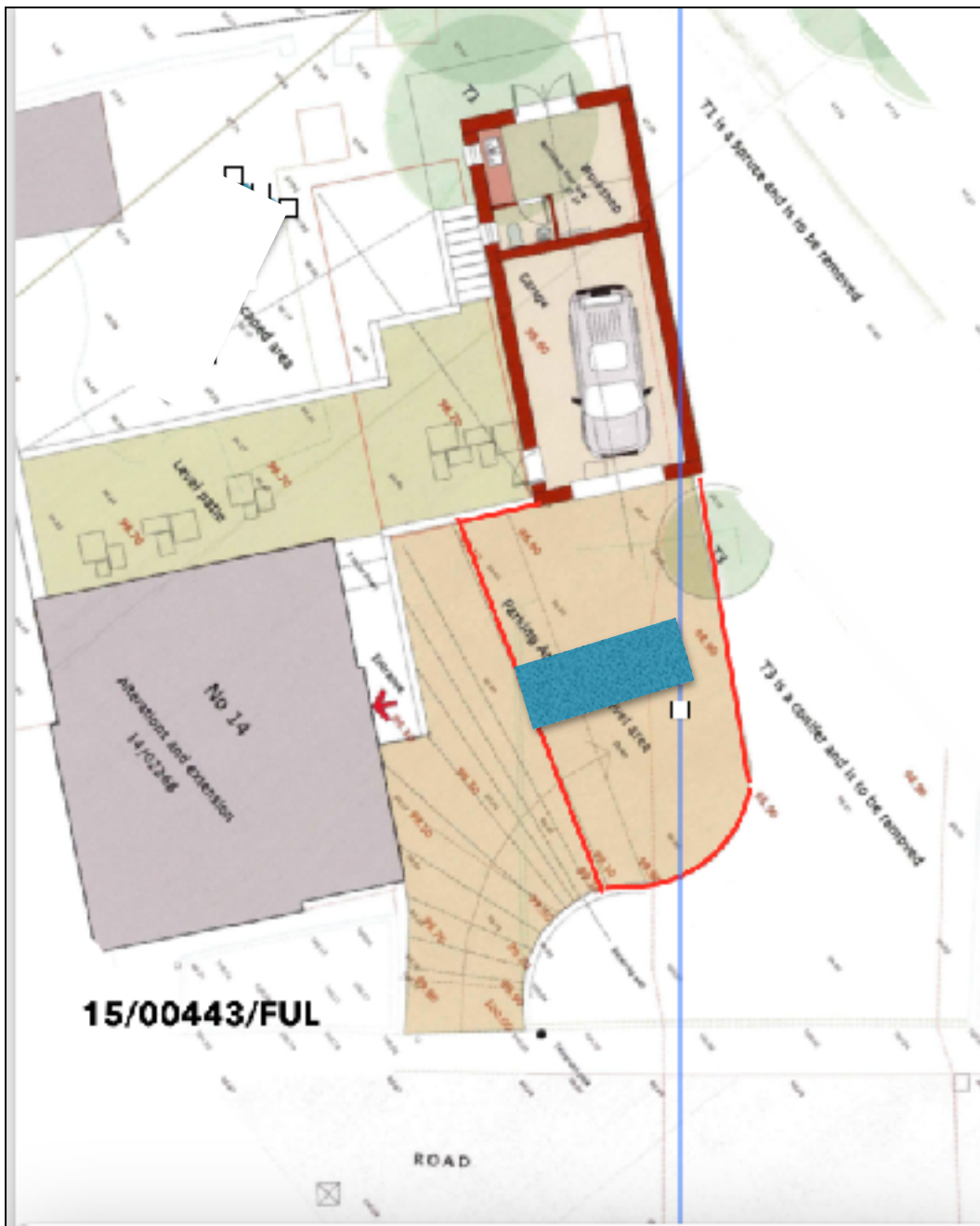


Figure 1 Comparison of parking on plan between approved 15/00443/ FUL and proposed 16/03397/FUL
 NB Given the levels indicated on the plan, the parking area on 16/03397/FUL will be 400mm lower than that on 15/00443/FUL . Full elevation and cross section plans are required to assess impact of the significant changes in landscaping and retaining walls that will be required to implement 16/03397/FUL as depicted.