

## **Proposed garage/annexe extension at Waldringfield Lodge (formerly Novacastria)**

The proposal includes the formation of a new access off Sandy Lane which will be the only access and have sightlines 59m in both directions. The existing two access points will be blocked off, both being substandard under present regulations.

The grounds of former Novacastria extend to approximately 1.3ha. A partial survey showing the grounds and the remaining trees forms part of the application.

Some of the trees still growing on site are to be removed and these are not shown on the plan. Also many trees have already been removed for various reasons. It would be helpful to get the complete picture if all the trees on the original survey were shown with those to be removed indicated in a different colour and those not yet removed but which it is intended to remove were shown also in another colour or code. At present some trees to be taken out remain in the ground especially two behind the proposed extension at the time of our visit still in the ground but thought to be decayed. They are not on the plan which is confusing. NB the application form asks if any trees are to be removed and the answer given is no.

The entire frontage to the property along Sandy Lane is about 143m. The proposal is to remove all of the hedging, some of which needs to be re-aligned to admit sightlines. Also the two entrance points to be blocked by adding 9m and 8m to the length of the new hedge. The entire hedge would then be replaced by laurel.

The existing hedge is an old mixed native hedge which was surveyed under the hedgerow survey in 2011 and had 13 species in it which is a very high number indicating an old or ancient hedge. It includes hazel, small leaved lime, oak, yew, holly, field maple and others. This hedge continues along Sandy Lane and both sides bordering farmland have the rich variety of species continuous apart from access points to fields. The farm hedges have been cut very short in recent years but the one at Novacastria was trimmed carefully and kept at a good height of about 2m.

The proposal is to remove the entire hedge and plant a new laurel hedge all the way along.

In view of pc policy of maintaining biodiversity and encouraging homeowners to do what they can in their gardens to help the wildlife crisis, the replacement of a very diverse hedgerow with a monoculture is not a move in the right direction. Ideally a new mixed species hedge would be planted once the re-alignment of the verges has taken place. The parts of the hedge not within the visibility splay could then be retained without disturbance.

The lengths of hedge indicated are

Gap in front of house; 9m to be infilled

Existing hedge as far as change of angle for sightline                      23m

Hedge within sightline N of new access: 16m (new planting)

South of new entrance 32m of re aligned edge

Remainder 40m of existing hedge

If as much as possible of the existing hedge is retained that amounts to 23m plus 40m totalling 63m which does not need to be excavated. The roots of such an old hedge will be very substantial and interlaced with nearby trees. Its removal may endanger the neighbouring trees and also mean the loss of the ground flora of native wild plants known to be of interest here.

The parts to be realigned could be planted with a mix such as 30% evergreen for screening using for example holly, wild privet and yew, with fruiting hawthorn and cherry plum and vigorous growers like field maple, wild cherry and beech would give a varied and interesting hedge which would support hundreds of species of wildlife.

The common laurel is a vigorous grower, evergreen and forms a good screen. The disadvantages are that it does not support wildlife except as a shelter and hiding place in winter. It has to be trimmed frequently as it grows so fast, which is a disturbance to any nesting birds and removes any flowers and berries it might otherwise produce on a very large tree. The Portugal Laurel is slightly better having smaller neater leaves and less vigorous growth but not much.

Laurel is also poisonous as the leaves contain cyanide. If piles of cut material are left then nothing will grow there. No wild flowers grow underneath a laurel hedge as leaves are continually falling which make the ground sterile.

We also discussed beech and this would perhaps grow well as it is a damp site or damper than most, Beech has been difficult in East Anglia since the increase of drought and dry summers and certain fungus disease it is prone too.

In the present time it is best advised to plant a mixture rather than a monoculture as if a disease arrives as with box hedging, the lot can be wiped out.

Other options

Within this large garden there is scope for screening off quite large areas with internal hedges for privacy, using whatever grows well. The native shrubs and trees will support the most wildlife but can be mixed with other fast growing screen evergreens such as *Eleagnus ebbingii* or *Griselinia*.

Mitigation: the owner has suggested plating a more varied hedge along the side boundaries. I am not sure what is already on the sides but possibly that it is already native hedging. As alot of trees have been removed from this site it would be a good idea to put back some

native hedging along the sides as in any case as the total loss of biodiversity will be quite high.

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