

New houses being built on the site of the old Reliance Works in Kelsall

References on the CWaC planning portal are: 11/02385 and 11/02392

At the meeting of Kelsall Parish Council on Monday 8th August the response to a complaint from a neighbour at the bottom of the village threw up an interesting and confusing answer.

The new houses currently being built on the site of the old Reliance Works on Chester Road are in Kelsall's conservation area, their planning permissions for the development dating from 2002 and 2004. Two retrospective planning applications are presently being considered by Cheshire West and Chester (CWA/C) as the result of the Enforcement Officer being made aware that the houses being built do not accord with the original planning permissions. The style of windows should be sash windows with thin glazing bars, and the lintels and sills are not to the approved design. The amended plans attempt to restore the houses to the permitted configuration. The agent has also added a chimney to plot 5, which was the site of one of the cottages on Chester Road, although it is not clear if this is just a 'dummy' chimney.

The issue raised at the Parish Council Meeting was that, despite the development being at the heart of Kelsall's designated conservation area, the conservation officers' role appears to be only as consultees, which, regrettably, does not give them the authority to enforce their opinions as part of the planning process. Now that the houses are complete, it seems to be difficult, if not impossible, to force the developer to conform to the original plans. Even ignoring the fenestration details, the height of the buildings might also be an issue!

Given that we have a conservation area in the village and a diligent and knowledgeable local authority conservation team, how on earth have we finished up with such a poor compromise on these houses? The failure by CWaC's Planning Department to monitor the building of these houses during the construction process clearly contributed significantly to the present problems.

As a response to the present amended applications which simply attempt to regularise this controversy, Kelsall Parish Council has requested that all future work in Kelsall's conservation area is monitored throughout the construction process and that more attention is paid to the views of the conservation team. These requests have also been drawn to the attention of Kelsall's Ward Councillors.

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