

DIFFERING OPINIONS: A model of proposed Wilderness House

'Ridiculous' architecture is blasted as house bid falters

A LANDOWNER'S efforts to build a traditional country house in a rural Suffolk village look destined to be denied.

Former theatrical agent Sara Low, from Darsham, wants to build a contemporary country house, with a flat roof and large sections of glass, on part of her land at the edge of a woodland area known as the Wilderness.

Her architects are citing a change in planning rules to justify building the property, but Suffolk Coastal

District Council planners have recommended the authority's development control committee rejects the plans when it meets on Wednesday.

The plans for the Wilderness House include a swimming pool and a woodland garden with statues placed as features within the woodland, which borders on the neighbouring village of Westleton.

Mrs Low's bid is supported by local MP John Gummer, who described it as "precisely the kind

of country home we had in mind when providing for the great British tradition of the country house".

It is also backed by top architect Sir Michael Hopkins, who said it was "eminently worthy of support as a piece of architecture".

"We have very few examples of this contemporary genre in the country.

"There are two small ones in Suffolk, more village houses than country houses; Jack Prichard's house at

Blythburgh and Cadbury Brown's house in Aldeburgh," he said.

Mrs Low's architects, Paul + O Architects Ltd, are citing a change to planning rules introduced by the Conservative government in 1997 to support the application.

It says an isolated new house in the countryside is justified if it is "clearly of the highest quality, is truly outstanding in terms of its architecture and landscape design and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and wider surroundings".

But council planners claim it is not outstanding enough in terms of architectural style and landscape improvements to meet the criteria



KEEN ON 21st CENTURY STYLES: Sara Low, who wants to build a new country house at Westleton

Photo: SPIKE POWELL

within the policy.

Mrs Low, of Darsham House, said her proposed home was more suited to her needs than her current one, a large Grade II listed house built in 1679, complete with servants' quarters.

"Architecture as far as I can see around here seems to have come to a grinding halt," said the widow.

She felt it was "ridiculous" to continue building copies of Georgian or Victorian houses.

"I'm very keen on 21st century architecture," she said.

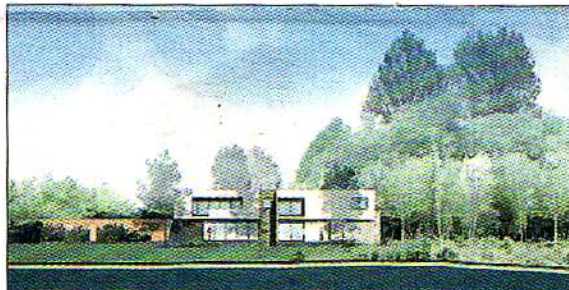
"I'm just hoping that the committee will think about it

very carefully. I'm very open-minded and I like to think people can do what they like with their own land provided it doesn't badly affect other people. I have been very careful with this application that in actual fact it should not offend or upset anybody."

Mrs Low's architects will tell planners the project "required huge commitment and vision" and is the "epitome of the England country house".

Westleton Parish Council objects to the proposals.

But Darsham Parish Council agreed by a majority to support them.



OUTSTANDING OR OUT OF KEEPING?: An artist's impression of the south elevation of Wilderness House