



**DISTINCTIVE:** The model of proposed Wilderness House at Westleton, which received planning permission yesterday

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# Modernist home set to be last for countryside

## Delight at planners' assent

**By Sarah Chambers**

A COUNTRY house likely to be the last of its kind has been given the planning green light in Suffolk.

Wilderness House, a large, modernist house, will be built on land at Westleton, near Yoxford.

The woman behind the project, Sara Low, of Darsham, was yesterday delighted at the decision by Suffolk Coastal District Council's north area development control sub-committee.

Suffolk Coastal MP John Gummer also welcomed the decision.

As Secretary of State for the Environment, he introduced a planning guideline which allowed new houses to be built as an exception to the ban on building in the countryside, where it is "truly outstanding in terms of its architecture and landscape design and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and wider surroundings".

But he said he was "very sorry" a draft planning statement from the Government is set to remove the policy exception, making it likely Wilderness House will be the last property allowed under present rules.

"I'm hoping very much at the last moment the



**WOMAN OF VISION:** Sara Low will be able to pursue her design

Government will change its mind on this issue," he said.

"It gives such a wonderful opportunity for fine architecture."

A majority of councillors decided to go against the planners' recommendation to refuse the application on the grounds that it was not outstanding enough to meet the criteria of the policy - saying it would result in the loss of woodland and wildlife habitat.

There have been mixed views on the plans. Architectural experts have praised them, while Suffolk Preservation Society said it was "a rare opportunity to add to the list of distinctive country houses in the county with a proposal of character designed specifically for the site".

But Suffolk Wildlife Trust, which lodged a late objection, claimed it would lead to a "net loss" to wildlife diversity.

Councillor Winter Rose said: "I'm now satisfied that this

really is a building which shows true excellence. We have here an exciting, unusual, large property which is designed to fit into a woodland which is promised to be enhanced, it seems to me."

Councillor Marian Andrews added: "I think we should be brave and bold and go for this. I think it will be good for Suffolk."

Mrs Low said she was "delighted" at the decision: "I think it's shown enormous vision."

She said it was sad that the exception in the planning guidelines was set to go.

"I think it's very sad actually, because when you look around the country at how few have been approved or built since the policy was first introduced, it's a drop in the ocean."

Mr Gummer said he was "very disappointed" in Suffolk Wildlife Trust's response.

He was enthusiastic about the planned house.

"It's exactly the sort of thing we want," he said.

"I think it will mean that in a county which has got some very fine houses it will now have a fine house of the 21st Century."

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