**Hessett Parish Council**

**M I N U T E S**

of an extrordinary meeting held at Hessett & Beyton Village Hall, Hessett on

**Monday 19th August 2019 at 7.00pm**

**Present**: Councillors: Michael Poulter (Chair), Graham Bauly, Simon Elsworth, Lynn Heymoz, Andrew Pearson, and Debbie Willis.

**In attendance:** Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council),

2 Members of the Public

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, especially the members of the public.

1. **Apologies**

Councillor Stuart Turvill tendered apologies which were approved by the meeting. Cllr Bauly was absent for the start of the meeting but joined it during item 34.a.i

1. **Declarations of Interest**
2. There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests declared.
3. There were no Other Disclosable Interests declared but Cllr Heymoz reported that, as a neighbour to Bridges, she had a private interest in item 35.a.i. The guidelines for conduct relating to Interests do not impose any restriction on participation but Cllr Heymoz had decided not to speak in the debate on item 35.ai, other than as to matters of fact.

1. **Public Forum**

The Chair ordered the public forum to be deferred to after the Clerk's introduction to the matters for consideration under item 35, in order to allow members of the public the maximum possibility to comment. The applicants related to 35.a.i apologised for the errors in their application and stated that they felt that the boundary was further from the margins of the proposed extension than had been mentioned. Where possible they had tried to stay within the existing footprint and also felt that as the new windows sat alongside existing windows, and on the front and rear only, there was no exacerbation of overlooking. In any event they felt that the recently planted hedging acts as a screen. The also felt that the size of their proposed changes were less than had been undertaken by neighbours and that the design cues for the re-modelled house had been picked up from other houses in the village.

1. **Planning & Environment**
2. **New Planning Application Consultations -**

**i. DC/19/03574:** Bridges, The Street, Hessett, IP30 9AX - *Erection of ground and first floor extensions to front, rear and side elevations with change in roof styles; Erection of porch and application of cladding to first floor elevations*.

The Chair called on the Clerk to highlight the main issues. Before addressing the substantive issues, the Clerk drew attention to a number of factual inaccuracies and points of missing information contained in the application, and showed photographs and other illustrations to demonstrate some of these points:

1. Scale of current house - In the opening paragraph the existing house is described as being two storey. As is noted later in the same Statement, the house it is in fact largely 1.5 storey. This is significant because the proposed extensions added to a full two storey building would represent far less impactful change than is the case on the mainly 1.5 storey building.
2. The existing flat roof extension is referred to as being the kitchen but in fact is shown in the plans as being the utility room (so the first floor bedroom extension mentioned under the first bullet point in Section 3 of the Statement is in fact over the utility room).
3. The drawing of the proposed south side elevation indicates a single storey element which is not shown on the plans and for which there would be no room within the site. The applicants have confirmed that this is an error.
4. The orientation of the house is mis-described in several places. This unintentionally makes interpretation of some of the plans difficult and confusing. For clarification:

* The existing single storey, flat roofed extension is in the *north*-east of the property (not the south-east).
* The proposal states (Section 6) that the front door ("main access") would be relocated to the "rear south-western elevation" In fact this refers to the current rear of the property which is actually on the eastern elevation.

1. Trees and hedges - Although existing hedges and trees are required to be shown on all application plans none are shown on either the site plan or the plan 'as existing'. In fact there is a significant number of trees on site, some of which are shown as being part of the proposal. The existing trees include:
2. a row of four or five willows running parallel with the western (street-facing) boundary, adjacent to the water course;
3. a relatively mature conifer tree near the south western corner of the existing house;
4. a row of young but tall, hedged maple trees (c 3.75m high) along the southern boundary running from immediately adjacent to the house to immediately adjacent to the garage.
5. The cluster of trees shown in the 'proposed' drawings have been largely removed, opening up the view from The Street.
6. In addition, the application form states that there are no trees or hedges within falling distance of the proposal and states that no pruning or removal of any hedges or trees would be required. As is clear from (5) above, this is inaccurate. The hedging trees mentioned at 5.c above would certainly have to be at least pruned to achieve the proposed extension and the length of hedging would probably need to be shortened. The conifer tree (b) would almost certainly touch the south-western corner of the proposed extension and may not survive the construction of foundations that would clearly affect its root structure.
7. Relationship to neighbouring houses - The relationship to other houses is materially misrepresented on the drawings of the existing and proposed layouts, as follows:
   1. The overall site map does not show the current size or positions or neighbouring houses. This is because the plan that has been used is out of date and does not reflect the significant changes that have been made to both of the immediately neighbouring buildings (Peddars Cottage and Fordacre).
   2. The relationship between Bridges (the application site) and Fordacre, to the south of Bridges is shown wrongly in the existing and proposed site plans at the bottom right of drawing 641/19/001. This is partly because of the different footprint of the neighbouring house referred to above, which sets it further east and therefore more in view from the eastern elevation of Bridges, and partly because Bridges itself has somehow been rotated to an incorrect angle. The combined affect of the inaccuracies is that the easterly sightlines from the southern end of the proposed extension do not reflect reality. This can be seen by comparing drawing 641/19/001 with the satellite view of the properties in the Planning Statement or the annotated versions of the site plan and satellite view on which the actual building lines and positions marked.

This is material when considering the accuracy and reliability of the Planning Statement's assertion that "The neighbouring properties will not be overlooked or affected by the proposed extensions." The Council's view is that this statement is not supported by the facts (see section 14 below).

1. Detailed design and construction - No drawings or details are provided as to the method of achieving the works and so no comments can be offered.

The Clerk went on to remind the Council that the national and local planning policy frameworks are pre-disposed in favour of granting permission for extensions to existing dwellings but that certain criteria must be met. Specifically policy H18 of the Housing section of the Mid-Suffolk Local Plan states that applications for extensions to existing dwellings will be approved, provided that they:

1. are in keeping with the size, design and materials of the existing dwelling;
2. will not materially or detrimentally affect the amenities of neighbours or the character and appearance of the area;
3. will not result in over-development within the curtilage.

The cumulative effect of a number of extensions to the existing dwelling will be regarded as a material consideration.

In discussion, the Council noted the errors of fact in the application and agreed that these were significant and should be highlighted in its response to the planning authority.

1. Considered the principle of whether a sizeable increase in floor space, as proposed (almost 20%), would be acceptable. In doing so it was cognisant of the requirement under policy H18 to consider the impact of cumulative extensions. In this regard it was noted that the three-bay garage at Bridges was recently converted to a two bay garage with living accommodation and utility space in the upper area and third bay. Notwithstanding this, and because Bridges sits within a fairly large plot, it was considered that the proposed level of extension would not of itself represent over-development within the curtilage. However, it was felt that, for the reasons set below, a different format, probably of single storey construction would be better suited to the site.
2. Considered the overall design, and whilst acknowledging that design is partly a subjective matter, the Council felt that the proposed changes to the appearance of Bridges would form a coherent and attractive entity in isolation from their context. However, contextual considerations lead to the Council's conclusion that the design of the extended house is inappropriate for its setting.
3. Noted that wooden cladding is proposed. Cladding would introduce a new material that is not used on the existing building or on its immediate neighbours (which are all of either brick, rendered brick or a mix of the two). It was felt that this would be an undesirable and unnecessary change that was demonstrably not in keeping with the materials of existing house. Furthermore it may well tend to emphasise the visual bulk of the proposed extensions.
4. Agreed that the way in which the mass of the extension would be distributed and how it would be perceived in its context, were important considerations. It was noted that most of the proposed increase of mass is to the first floor level and it was felt that this would have a significant impact on the streetscape and on neighbours, both of who have submitted objections.

The Council agreed that the current house had clearly been designed to sit well in its context and is predominantly of 1.5-storey construction. Sensitivity was shown to the relationship with the C18th cottage to the north west of the house (Peddars Cottage) which is also of 1.5 storey construction and with which Bridges shares the short drive giving vehicular access to the highway. The southernmost part of Bridges comes to within about a metre of the boundary with Fordacre but is only single storey (the study).

The Council discussed the context in detail, noting that from the road, Bridges and Peddars Cottage are seen as part of a coherent streetscape and that, coming from the north, all the other visible houses, starting with Holly House, on the corner of The Street and Drinkstone Road, and the modern houses on Elm Drive and continuing down The Street, are of primarily 1.5-storey construction, speaking to the vernacular of this part of the village. While to the south of Bridges the larger neo-Georgian house (Fordacre) of two storey construction with rendered elevations can only be glimpsed from the road (and indeed is hardly visible from the street at all). The Council felt that cottage-style feel of the setting that has been maintained by the use of small, gabled dormer windows to the upper storey with only the small central section of the existing house being of full two-storey proportion was significant. In this connection it was noted, from the drawings and especially the photos of the existing elevations, that this makes the rest of the upper parts of the house visually recede, thereby minimising the sense of mass.

It was agreed that the proposal would bring forward both the northern and southern ends of the first storey into additional full-height gable-ends on the west (street) side of the design, and add a further full-height gable to this elevation at the south-western corner. It was agreed that this proposed structure would work in the exactly opposite way to the existing design: the existing mass of the building would be reinforced and the increase in mass would be visually amplified. This effect would be especially great at the south-western end because the whole of the existing single-storey element sits well back from the main western facade and leaves the external chimney visible, creating both a receded and a stepped profile, as opposed to a hard-edged and mono dimensional element as proposed.

1. The Council considered that the effects of the proposals are considerable, with the whole affect being not just to create a larger form but to create a form that will have the appearance of almost double the existing mass and in a style out of sympathy with its context. At the northern end the overall effect would tend to make Peddars Cottage unacceptably visually subservient to a much more dominant Bridges - with the risk that the C18th cottage may seem to have an almost subsidiary or outbuilding-like relationship to the new form. At the south-eastern end, the relationship of Bridges to Fordacre would also be altogether changed. The proposed extension would add a new full height mass close to the boundary and add a new storey (including a window) within about a metre of the boundary. This would create a significant level of overlooking into several of the neighbour's windows (on their western and northern elevations) and across their main recreational garden. In summer the hedging would do something to mitigate the considerable overlooking, as long as it is grown to its current height, but as it is deciduous it would have little or no effect for most of the year.
2. Overall and given all of the above, the Council is of the opinion that the proposals are not in keeping with the size, design and materials of the existing dwelling, that they would materially and detrimentally affect the amenities of neighbours, that they would materially and detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the area and that therefore **resolved to object** to them.
3. Furthermore, in relation to ecology and biodiversity, the Council noted that although the applicants had appended two reports dealing with ecology and biodiversity to their application, these reports were are not specific to the application site and are both were of date. The presence of water voles on the watercourse has subsequently been established, despite the comments in these reports. However, the Council agreed that although Bridges is adjacent to the water course it seems unlikely that the proposals themselves would have any negative effect on ecology or biodiversity. In view of this, the Council **resolved** only to seek that any grant of approval, of this or a future proposal, be subject to an appropriate construction management plan aimed at protecting the ecology of the site and immediate environs.
4. Finally it was noted that there has been no statutory notice of this planning application posted in a visible place adjacent to the application site. This means that most residents have been unaware of the proposals and therefore unable to respond. This is clearly irregular and unfair to those residents who may wish to register comments. The Parish Council therefore **resolved** to request that a statutory notice be displayed as required and that the general consultation period be extended to afford residents the opportunity of considering the proposal and commenting on it.

**ii. DC/19/03586:** May Cottage The Street, Hessett, IP30 9AZ - *Erection of single storey rear extension; Internal alterations to provide link to new extension; Installation of rooflight.*

**iii DC/19/03587 (Listed Building Consent):** May Cottage The Street, Hessett, IP30 9AZ - *Erection of single storey rear extension; internal alterations to provide link to new extension; Installation of rooflight.*

In considering this application it was noted that it was the third iteration and that the Council had supported the previous iterations but that the conservation officer had not been satisfied. The proposal under consideration was less obtrusive from the street and from neighbouring properties, although of a more radical design. It was understood that this was to meet advice that the existing and proposed new elements should be more visually distinguishable.

The Council **resolved to support** the application but **resolved** to record in its formal response that, whilst it recognises that this version of the application probably arises from discussions with the Authority's conservation officer, both the previous versions (rejected by the Authority) were felt to be considerably more sympathetic and appropriate.

**The meeting closed at 8.10pm**

Signed as a true record by authority of the Council

Chair

Date