

ASHMANSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the special Meeting of the Council

Date: 28th March 2013 **Time:** 7.30 pm
Place: Crux Easton Church
Present: Cllr Alan Cox (Chairman) Cllr Carol O'Shaughnessy (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors: Cllr Johnnie Johnson Cllr Kieron Black
Cllr Mark Benzing
In Attendance: Maxta Thomas (Clerk)
Visitors: Hugo Haig Janey Haig
7 members of the public

Action

1. Apologies

No apologies received.

2. Planning Applications

Cllr Cox gave an introduction to the meeting, stating that at the previous council meeting held on 12th March 2013, proper procedure was not followed with regard to the Hallam planning application. The final vote on whether to object to the application was not held in public.

Therefore, this special meeting was called to ensure proper and lawful discussion of the planning application in open council, with the public present.

Cllr Cox also noted that he and the Clerk will ensure that due procedure is followed in the future.

Cllr Cox offered Mr Haig the Council's apologies for the oversight.

2a. Hallam, Cross Lane - [BDB/77677](#)

Cllr Benzing noted his interest in this application as he is a direct neighbour. Cllr Benzing will therefore not vote on the parish council's final decision.

Cllr Johnson noted that he has placed an objection on a personal basis since the last meeting, but that he will consider any new information this evening in an open and fair manner.

Mr Haig introduced Mr Dowling, a consultant. He was Conservation Officer BDBC for many years. He was present for the original application for Hallam, which he supported. He stated that he felt the application should be considered in its policy context (Conservation Area document, AoNB, planning guidelines etc). The extension has been designed by the original architect, so it is in keeping with the existing building, but with some differences, such as the glass link. He feels that there is only one public viewpoint where this would be seen, and this would be against the backdrop of the rest of the building. Existing access to Hallam is not ideal as the visibility pulling out onto the road is not good. Proposed access appears to be in a better position for Highways access. He feels there will be a visual improvement with the demolition of old outbuildings. He noted that the Conservation Area document highlights the need to preserve and enhance the Village – he feels that this has been achieved.

Mr Haig had no new points to add.

Cllr Cox invited members of the public to question and comment on the planning application, and then the members of the Council to do the same. He then stated that the Council would make its decision. The Clerk verified that there were three response options; to approve, to approve subject to amendments, or objection.

Mr Sherston asked about the council's previous objections and if they were just about the glass link. Cllr Cox noted that comments made at the last meeting are now null due to the lapse in procedure. Mr Opperman asked for clarification of the Council's concerns as he did not attend last meeting. Cllr Cox summarised about the increase in size of the extension compared to the original building and in comparison to the plot size. He also noted the increase through a pre-existing planning consent. Cllr Cox stated that it would be unreasonable to object on the final size of the property compared to the plot size in this case. The other concern was the amount of glass being used for the link and the studio.

Mrs Sherston stated she liked the design of the house, and believes that glass is a traditional material that adds to the design. She also noted that the current garage does not fit well with the rest of the property as it stands. It was noted by Cllr Cox and other councillors that there was no objection to taking down the existing garage.

Mr Anscomb queried the procedures, stating that the Council appear to have already reached its decision. Cllr Cox again noted the breach in procedures and that the Council is happy to take any further comments about the application, which may result in a different decision. Mr Anscomb felt that the application does not fit in with the Conservation Area document because of the increase in size of the property.

Mrs Hardy noted that she lives directly opposite Hallam and as such is more directly affected than others. She feels that once the extension and hedging are complete it will not have a significant adverse effect on the aspect of the village.

Mr Dowling noted that increase in size (floor area) does not really give a proper idea of the overall impact of a building, and as such has been dropped by BDBC as a material objection.

Mrs Hardy noted that there are buildings that have been erected in the past which have had an adverse effect on the village – the Hallam application will not have a bad effect.

Mr Anscomb asked if rural areas should have appropriate buildings. Mr Dowling noted that there is separate Special Planning Guidance for this, but that Hallam is in line with this guidance. Mr Anscomb noted his concern that the amount of glass proposed is not in keeping with the rural nature of the village. Cllr Cox observed that there are buildings with glass conservatories, so there is already some glass in the village.

Mr Bays is in favour of the application, for reasons already stated in this meeting.

Cllr Black noted that Hallam is a modern building that does fit in with Conservation Area document. He felt that the new driveway and hedging will also help enhance the village.

Cllr O'Shaughnessy had no comments

Cllr Johnson noted the original concerns about the size of the property when it was first built. He also noted the duty of the Council to abide by Conservation Area document. He then noted remarks in the document about how orange/red bricks of handmade structure should be used in a rural setting, for which Ashmansworth qualifies. He expressed concern about the many applications for this site over the years that have requested an increase in size compared to the original cottage that was on site. He felt that the various applications should not be considered on their own but as a whole in conjunction with the others. He noted that there will be significant reduction of vegetation on the north side, and significant reduction in tree canopy, which he feels will open up property to public view. This will significantly alter the character of the village and is not in keeping with a rural area. Large areas of glass are also not rural in nature, and therefore not in keeping with village.

Cllr Johnson is also concerned about the danger of other developers seeing this as an open invitation to slowly increase the size of properties in the village. Mrs Sherston observed that many houses in Ashmansworth have been extended, and that this one is no different. Cllr Johnson noted that he feels that this application is not in keeping with the Conservation Area document. Mrs Sherston stated that she felt it was, and that given that the building is already there, then the extension should be allowed. Mrs Hardy asked for verification of the date of the Conservation Area document, which was confirmed as 1989, before the existing building at Hallam was built. Mrs Hardy observed that perhaps the Conservation Area document should be updated, as Hallam now fits in very well with the rest of the village (in her opinion), as will the extension.

Mr Opperman did not understand what the issue is if no-one can see the building. Cllr Johnson asked for verification on removal of laurels. Mr Haig confirmed that these would be removed, especially as these are near the proposed new entrance. Cllr Cox observed that there is a high hedge around the property and asked if this continued behind the laurels. Mr Haig confirmed that it does.

Cllr Benzing observed that he felt there should be no objection to extending the property in principle, and that a significant part of application is ok in principle, and that possible objections were fairly minor. He did express concern about the high ratio of glass and the impact this might have on the view from the village. Mr Sherston noted that whilst the Conservation Area documents notes the need to enhance and protect surroundings, it is not intended to treat the village as a museum. He felt that architecture needs to move with the times and available materials, and that this should be borne in mind. Therefore, usage of glass should not be seen as a problem.

Mr Dowling noted it is a conservation area and not a preservation area, and as such new buildings should not be rejected out of hand. It is more about managing new development rather than stopping it. Cllr Johnson noted his disagreement – the Conservation Area is to preserve or enhance the area.

A vote was then taken on how to respond to BDBC about the application.

Cllr O'Shaughnessy – No objection.

Cllr Black – No objection

Cllr Cox – expressed his favourable opinions about the house. He felt that the glass in not excessively aggressive. No objections.

Cllr Johnson - objections about glass and size of extension.

Council vote was 3 to 1 for no objections.

2b. Hallam, Cross Lane – T/00238/13/TCA

Cllr Benzing noted his interest in this application as he is a direct neighbour. Cllr Benzing will therefore not vote on the parish council's final decision.

This is a new Notice of Intent (NoI) replacing T/00139/13/TCA.

Mr Haig updated the Council about the current NoI, which is for canopy and height reduction, rather than pollarding. Mr Haig has consulted with David Hill at BDBC as a result of Parish Council concerns, resulting in the current NoI, which was drawn up in consultation with his own tree expert and David Hill. He reiterated the health and safety aspect of managing the trees.

Cllr Cox has circulated the document to neighbours of Hallam, and to councillors. He noted that the revised application is not dissimilar to one some time ago that was granted for the Old Vicarage. Mr Haig noted that the height is to be taken down to no less than 16 metres. He is keen to preserve trees for future.

Cllr Cox noted some feedback from neighbours – two had been in favour of pollarding with everyone else being against. The current NoI has had only positive feedback, although Cllr Cox has not been able to contact everyone.

Cllr Johnson asked if the intention was to treat the trees in a similar fashion to the neighbour's trees. Mr Haig said that this was laid out in the NoI, and he would act in accordance with this if permission is granted. The application is very similar to the previous one at The Old Vicarage. Cllr Johnson observed that it seems that the height of the trees may be shorter than those at The Old Vicarage. Mr Haig noted that the height in NoI will be a minimum height – they may be left at a taller height.

Mr Anscomb noted that he could not see a good reason for lowering the height of the trees, as they are noted particularly in the Conservation Area document. He also noted that they are important from an ecological point of view. He feels that reducing height is against the Conservation Area.

Mr Opperman noted the limes in Crux Easton, which he owns – he does work for the Forestry Commission, who are constantly asking for limes to be cleaned up.

Mr Bays noted that he feels the trees will need to be managed at some stage.

Mrs Hardy noted that she was in favour of the plans, particularly for the increase in light. She feels that the height reduction will not significantly impact the streetscape.

Mr Anscomb noted that he felt that the trees do not need maintaining, as they will survive quite well by themselves. Cllr Cox noted that David Hill has said that reducing the height will ultimately rejuvenate the trees, and not damage them.

Cllr Cox again noted the immediate neighbours' support for the current scheme.

A vote was then taken on how to respond to BDBC about the application.

Cllr Johnson – Abstained.

Cllr Black – observed that the trees will be shaped rather than just lopped. The work will enhance the trees. No objections.

Cllr O'Shaughnessy – no objections

Cllr Cox - no objections.

Final vote – no objections.

Mr Haig reported that land ownership searches have been completed so that the work on removal of laurel from verges may be carried out.

2c. Drove Cottage, Crux Easton - [BDB/77765](#)

Mr Opperman owns land near Drove Cottage. Neighbours have not objected. He noted some pre-work being done prior to permission. He also noted that permission should not be given if applicant is going to run business from property. Cllr Cox confirmed that this would not be allowed for domestic curtilage.

It was noted that the building would look very similar to how it does now, but with new or updated areas of the building.

Mr Anscorb noted that the building is visible from nearby footpaths and is currently an eyesore. He also noted that it is quite visible from other areas.

Cllr Benzing noted that he is not encouraged that some work has already been carried out. However, he also noted that he felt that the application will significantly enhance the property.

Cllr Johnson is happy with plans, but would like to see some planting to enhance the view – some trees have already been taken out.

Cllr O'Shaughnessy has no objections. Noted that the finished building should look similar to the original.

Cllr Black observed that new planting would be important to preserve The Drove itself. However, no objections to building.

Unanimously agreed no objections, but some replanting should take place. Clerk to contact BDBC.

Clerk

3. Consideration of further planning applications received

Red Roses, Cross Lane - [BDB/77809](#)

The planning application above has been registered with BDBC in the last few days. The Clerk does not yet have the formal notice and invitation to comment.

Cllr Cox noted that there has not yet been time for the Council to fully consider this application, and proposed that a full council meeting be held towards the end of April. The Clerk confirmed that this is acceptable to BDBC.

Next full Council meeting to be held on 23rd April.