



## Pippins Court Planning Application

2020/02214/GDPA

### Objection from the Vale of Evesham Civic Society

#### Introduction

Pippins Court is formed of two separate residential blocks. The block to the north-west, nearer the river, is essentially three floors. The ground floor is used for storage, the first and second floors are residential. It has 4 separate flats. The block to the south-east is essentially four floors. The ground floor is used for storage, the first, second floors and third floors are residential. It has 9 separate flats.

The two blocks are connected together at first floor level by a steel walkway and this continues around the block to the south and leads to the path running southwards from Waterside. The flats have no lifts, only internal stairways.

The proposal to add two floors to both blocks means that the block to the north-west would have 5 floors and have 8 separate flats and the block to the south-east six floors and 15 separate flats.

In total the number of flats would rise from the existing 13 flats to 23 flats.

The Design and Access statement clearly explains that the proposal is based on and complies with Class A of Part 20 which was brought forward in August 2020 in order to progress the Government's agenda of providing additional dwellings by improving the efficiency of existing residential sites and buildings.

The Civic Society does not believe it complies. We are objecting on four grounds:

1. In relation to number and height of existing storeys to the buildings;
2. Flooding risks in relation to the building;
3. The external appearance of the building;
4. Impact on the amenity of the existing building and neighbouring premises including overlooking, privacy and the loss of light;

#### 1. In relation to number and height of existing storeys to the buildings

Class A states that a building will not comply if:

*(b) above ground level, the building is less than 3 storeys in height;*  
*(e) the floor to ceiling height of any additional storey is— (i) more than 3 metres in height; or (ii) more than the floor to ceiling height of any of the existing storeys, whichever is the lesser, where such heights are measured internally;*

The Planning Application for the existing building was agreed in 2005, before the 2007 floods. However, there was good awareness at that time that the area is subject to flooding.

Therefore the residential floors of the two buildings were placed above normal flood level by placing them on top of a floor designed for storage purposes.

Examination on site and the drawings supplied shows that the ground floor of both blocks is not as high as the residential floors above. They would probably not be high enough for residential occupation.

Class A of part 20 states that the additional storeys must not be higher than the floor to ceiling height of any of the existing storeys. This means that the additional storeys would need to be the same height as the ground floor and therefore probably not habitable. They would also need to be visually different from the existing residential floors and not as shown on the drawings.

It might be put forward that the ground floor should not be considered as a 'storey' but was provided to raise the rest of the buildings above flood level. If this were to be the case, then the north-east block would only be two storeys and Class A of Part 20 would not be applicable.

In summary, the proposals do NOT comply with Class A of Part 20 and should not be agreed.

## 2. Flooding risks in relating to the building

The Design and Access Statement contains a section on Flooding Assessment which we wish to challenge in terms of its coverage. The assessment deals with the actual building. As described in 1. above, it has been recognised that flooding can happen as the ground floor is not residential but used for storage. However, the Assessment makes no mention whatsoever of access to the building during flooding.

The existing building obtained planning permission in January 2005. This was before the major flood of the Evesham in July 2007 and since then a number of other major flooding events have affected Evesham. We are led to believe with continued Climate Change, such flooding events will become more frequent in future and it is unlikely that any effective flood mitigation measures will be implemented for the river Avon in the foreseeable future.

The only vehicle access to Pippins Court is via Waterside. The road is frequently closed when flooding occurs and this restricts access to the building. At these times the car park is also flooded. In the 2007 floods, people had to be rescued from the Mortimers Quay flats by Port Street by helicopter and rubber boats. This building is at a similar height above the river to Pippins Court.

Pippins Court is provided with a 'Fire Escape' which leads to an access road leading up to the adjacent cemetery car park. This is at level higher than the ground floor of the building and therefore less liable to flooding.

We have to consider what would happen when the next major flood event occurs. With the rise of the level of water, Waterside is flooded and closed by the Highway Authority. Access to the building is not easily possible. The residents can stay put in the buildings but should a fire or a medical problem arise then rapid attention would be needed. The emergency services would find it very difficult to reach Pippins Court. It is possible that an ambulance could reach the building along the narrow footpath from Saxonbury, but that is 400 metres

away and often blocked by parked vehicles at the Saxonbury end. Battleton Brook running alongside this path may flood and preclude the use of the path. In any event response time would be very slow.

In summary, with the current knowledge of Climate Change forecasting and the certainty of further more frequent and severe flooding, we feel that it would be irresponsible to allow further residential development at Pippins Court with the addition of 10 flats. There is a real risk of people being cut off and lives could be at an increased risk of being lost in these emergency situations.

### 3. External Appearance of Building

It is unfortunate that some of the elevations shown in the Planning Application do not properly show the actual physical size of the proposal. This is shown in the drawing of the north-west block shown below shows the roof as an outline and more importantly only shows the building behind as an outline, thus diminishing the true size of the proposal.



North West Elevation

Pippins Court can be seen from:

- The South West, Waterside cemetery. Any increase in height over the current acceptable height will tend to dominate the quiet atmosphere of the cemetery.
- The South East, the green corridor containing the Battleton Brook with a proposed nature reserve. This is a very special place and any increase in height over the current acceptable height will tend to dominate the quiet atmosphere of this park area.
- The North East, the Pippins Green caravan park. The caravan park provides touring caravans for visitors to Evesham and is important to the local tourist industry. The increase of height to Pippins Court will totally dominate the site.
- The North West, Corporation Meadow and the riverside walk. Pippins Court can easily be seen across the river from the riverside walk, just 100 metres away. The current building is of a similar height to the houses fronting Waterside to the north east and the cottages to the south west. With the proposed increase of height, the building would be out of scale with the other buildings and indeed there are no buildings of a similar scale anywhere along the whole of the riverside walk. This includes Northwick Hotel which has three storeys. It should be noted that the riverside walk together with Corporation Meadow is a very popular attraction.

In conclusion, we object on the grounds that from all four viewpoints, the proposed building is unacceptable.

#### 4. Impact on the amenity of the existing building and neighbouring premises including overlooking, privacy and the loss of light.

The design and access statement deals mentions properties in Mansion Gardens, just over 70 metres away but fails to mention the adjacent Pippins Green caravan park. This is regrettable.

Pippins Green caravan park is located generally to the east of Pippins Court and has around 10 static mobile homes and provision for touring caravans.. The site is overlooked at present With the addition of two storeys to both buildings, the site will be further badly overlooked, prevent natural light to the caravans, the closest of which is within 5 metres of the building. It is unlikely that anyone would want to stay at the park after completion of the building works and it is improper than an existing building should be so affected.

In conclusion, we object on the grounds that the amenity of the adjoining property is badly affected.

#### Other matters of concern

We share with the residents the concern expressed over the following:

- Car parking arrangements. The car park does not seem to have been changed from its current arrangement. Does it have sufficient space?
- Storage Space. This is currently at ground floor. This cannot be increased so how will it cope with an additional 10 flats?
- Construction. The proposal involves taking the roof off both buildings, installing two more storeys and then replacing the roof. It is difficult to see how this can be carried out without severe disruption to existing residents in terms of noise, dust and obstruction during the delivery and storage of materials.

#### A Committee Matter

The determination of this application will set something of a precedent for Wychavon District Council in that:

- It will be probably be the first based on Class A of Part 20, certainly in Evesham
- If approved the north east block will be the highest in Evesham.

It is therefore requested that this should be taken to Committee so that the views of all those affected can be properly heard and taken into account..

On behalf of the Vale of Evesham Civic Society

Colin Tether  
Acting Hon. Secretary  
8<sup>th</sup> November 2020