DESIGN/ACCESS, HERITAGE STATEMENT
AND EXTERNAL MATERIALS

In respect of a Retrospective Planning Application for alterations to an existing drive and wall
at
The Old Fox, 25 Fox Street, Great Gransden, Sandy, Beds, SG19 3AA

The Project

This retrospective planning application concerns changes made to the forecourt and drive at The Old Fox. Prior to the changes, we identified several concerns with the existing design and access that we wished to address. These were:

- Access to the drive was via a steep slope with high brick walls on either side. Entry and exit in winter could be hazardous.
- The line of sight when exiting the drive was not good. Cars needed to edge across the footpath into the road to see both pedestrians and vehicles. This could be dangerous, particularly at school dropping off and picking up times, when cars were parked opposite to the entrance to The Old Fox. Because of the parked cars, vehicles entering Fox Street from the Caxton Road junction, including buses and lorries, were forced to drive on the wrong side of the road. This created a risk of collision.
- It was difficult to turn vehicles around on the forecourt, particularly when there were parked vehicles already there.
- The flower borders on the forecourt were surrounded by low brick walls which had on numerous occasions caused damage to visiting vehicles and to my own. This led to some visitors not wishing to enter the drive, and instead parking on the road.
- There were and still are increasing volumes of traffic in the village, and the new housing projects have subsequently added to the issue. We were experiencing more and more cars parked in Fox Street for dropping off and picking up at school times, and for events held at the Reading Rooms. This increased the need, whenever possible, to have vehicles visiting The Old Fox parked on the forecourt, not the road.
- The area on the Caxton Road side of the entrance to The Old Fox, immediately in front of the garage, was overgrown and looked unsightly. This area was managed by Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Department. Highways had cut down some dead trees, but the trunks had been left in an unsightly state. The Parish Council had written to me in the past asking for the vegetation to be cut back. Even when this was done, the footpath in front of the land was still quite narrow, making it difficult for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, pushchairs and prams to navigate. This meant that these users often crossed the road close to the Caxton Road junction when it would have been safer to navigate along Fox Street and then cross at a later stage where kerbstones dropped.
- The look and design of the modern brick walls in the forecourt were not in keeping with the listed property.

- The York Stone walls at the front of the forecourt had been built, modified and extended at different times and were of varying heights and quality.
- There had been several burglaries and attempted burglaries in Great Gransden. We wanted to reduce the risk of our property being targeted

The following changes were made to address these points:

- The entrance to the property was moved some 7 metres further along Fox Street, away from the Caxton Road junction, so that it was opposite the Bakers Court entrance. This had the benefit of ensuring vehicles were not parked opposite the drive, hence making it safer for exiting cars. It also greatly improved the line of sight to the Caxton Road junction.
- I took over the land on the Caxton Road side of the entrance to The Old Fox immediately in front of the garage. This was not owned by anyone but was maintained by Highways. This had the full approval of Highways and the Parish Council. A Stopping Up Order was granted by Cambridge Magistrates Court so that the land could be utilised by myself to create a larger forecourt. This helped to ensure that visitors parked on the forecourt rather than in the road.
- I removed the unsightly trunks that were on the stopped-up land and created a steep grass border next to the footpath. This increased the width of the footpath and improved its usability. It also improved the line of sight when exiting The Old Fox drive. Highways requested that the new hedge was no closer than 1.8m from the kerb which we achieved.
- A new York stone wall was built along the length of the property in a similar form to the previous wall and at a consistent height of 1 metre. Salvaged stone from the previous wall was reused. The consistent height of the wall enabled us to raise the ground level at the west side of the drive to match the height of the existing ground adjoining the property.
- The modern brick walls on the forecourt were removed. All edges around flower borders were made level with the forecourt. As well as improving the look at the front of the listed property, this helped to minimise risk of damage to cars and created greater driveable width as you entered the property. The flower borders were also reduced in width to create more space to manoeuvre vehicles on the forecourt.
- Limestone setts were used and set in Easyjoint to ensure a permeable surface. A soak away was created on the drive to aid this.
- Electrically operated wooden gates were installed to control access to the forecourt, and therefore reduce the risk of burglary.

Conclusion

I trust this explains the rationale for the work carried out. It should be noted that Cambridge County Highways were fully aware and involved with the project and the Parish Council was consulted and they had no objections: they considered the changes to be of benefit to Great Gransden residents. I also consulted by phone with Huntingdonshire District Planning in 2019.who informed me that a planning application was not required. Highways were the ones who needed to be involved.