

We don't want pitfall

ANDREW JEFFERSON

NEIGHBOURS have raised fears of another Mt Waverley-style pit collapse after the City of Melbourne approved plans to extend a historic home in East Melbourne.

Architect KPDO has applied for a planning permit for the partial demolition of 99 Hotham St while retaining the facade of one of the suburb's earliest homes.

Homeowner Tim Storey wants to build a two-storey rear extension to his \$5 million

home plus two basement levels up to 6m below ground.

The first basement level would be a garage with a squash court on the second.

Twenty-three objections, including one from the East Melbourne Historical Society, were received — on heritage grounds and due to the deep level of excavation.

Objector Graham Shepherd, who lives in nearby

Simpson St, told councillors a time bomb was planted next door to his property in 1998 in the form of an excavation.

"It intersected the groundwater flow and water crept up the wall causing severe damage, which was repaired at the time," Mr Shepherd said.

"Ten years later, two huge cracks developed, each 12m long on our wall as the foundations had slipped substantially,

(due to) differential drying of foundation soil."

Another resident raised the possibility of a repeat of the landslide at Mt Waverley.

Councillors approved the permit subject to conditions.

Cr Jackie Watts was the only councillor to vote against the permit, saying councillors lacked detailed technical information in which to make an informed decision. "It is a big

overbuild in my view and it is a threat to the landscape," Cr Watts said.

However, Cr Rohan Lepert said the application met all the planning criteria and, if the council rejected it, this would only get reversed if it went to VCAT.

"If a planning permit is issued today, it doesn't mean the development will automatically go ahead," Cr Lep-

pert said. "It still needs a building permit.

"Where there is a grey area in the planning sense, I'm only too happy to take a slightly conservative line and let VCAT ... hopefully get the best outcome for the community.

"But there is no grey area here. As far as the planning scheme goes, the application is compliant. The additional conditions that have been suggested are as far as we can go as the responsible authority."

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Neighbours fear huge extension to \$5m home