

NORTHERN PLANNING COMMITTEE – 13 April 2011

UPDATE TO AGENDA

APPLICATION NO.

11/0144M

LOCATION

St Peters Church, The Village, Prestbury

UPDATE PREPARED

11 April 2011

CONSULTATIONS

English Heritage – In respect of the extension we have commented that it should not project in front of the church' east gable. The applicant points out that we have agreed the footprint in pre application discussions and we agree that the solid wall footprint is now acceptable. It is however still the case that the roof projects in front of the gable. We do not intend to take our objection to this detail further but believe it is essential to resolve the issue if the scheme is approved.

Strategic Highways Manager – No objections

APPLICANTS SUBMISSION

- Archaeology – Archaeological evaluation works have been completed and an interim report has been produced.
- A response to the initial concerns raised by English Heritage has also been received.
- Copy of results from Parish Council Survey, which show support for the proposal. 448 for, 203 against.
- Details of the intended community use of the church extension.

KEY ISSUES

Highways

The Strategic Highways Manager notes that the extension would be ancillary to the existing church use and will provide extra facilities for the church users. The extension would not materially increase trips and parking to the site as visitors will normally already be making a trip to the church.

Therefore, no significant highways safety issues are raised.

Archaeology

The Council's Archaeologist has been monitoring the excavation works in the churchyard. Unsurprisingly, burials are present in the current excavated trenches but, crucially, these all appear to be of later post-medieval date and are at a depth, which has removed evidence of earlier burials and structures. On the evidence of the present sample, it would be reasonable to conclude that a similar situation is present in the other localities where piles are proposed. This means that although it will be important to ensure that as-yet undisturbed burials are properly dealt with in the unexcavated pile locations, there will not be a need for widespread excavation across the footprint of the proposed extension in order to deal with a complex sequence of earlier remains.

There is also the issue of the numerous vaults within the footprint. The Council's Archaeologist has been assured that the piles will not interfere with any of these structures and the piling plan does indicate that this will be the case. Experience shows, however, that problems can arise on site during the piling process and robust procedures need to be in place to ensure that any vaults that do need to be disturbed (and the burials contained within) are subject to an appropriate level of recording. A further point concerns the grave slabs and table tomb tops that will be sealed beneath the floor of the extension. These have been recorded but in order to ensure their adequate protection, the footprint needs to have a layer of terram matting set out before the slab or its aggregate base are established.

The interim report following recent evaluations has now been received, which now includes proposals for further mitigation. These outline an appropriate strategy and are in line with what was agreed at the various site monitoring meetings. They will form the basis of the detailed archaeological mitigation statement which should be secured by condition if planning permission is granted.

Landscaping

At the time of writing no additional landscaping details relating to the church site have been received. However, it is understood that areas for additional planting have been identified at the southern side of the site. Whilst it would have been preferable to receive the information prior to the determination of the application, it is considered to be a matter that could potentially be dealt with by condition.

Design issue

The key issue outlined in the committee report is the relationship between the proposed extension and the east elevation of the Church. English Heritage have agreed the line of the solid wall footprint but remain very concerned that the roof still projects in front of the east elevation. It is considered that an amending plans conditions, prior to commencement, could deal with this issue and ensure that the roof overhang does not project in front of the east elevation.

CONCLUSION

Sufficient archaeological information has now been received to enable a determination of the application; an appropriate mitigation strategy can be conditioned. There remains an outstanding issue in respect of the roof overhang in front of the east elevation of the Church; however there is confidence that this can be overcome with modest amendments and can be dealt with by condition. The outstanding landscaping requirements can also be dealt with by planning conditions. Therefore in accordance with the main committee report, a recommendation of approval is made subject to conditions.

NORTHERN PLANNING COMMITTEE – 13 April 2011

UPDATE TO AGENDA

APPLICATION NO.

11/0107M & 11/0108M

LOCATION

Ford house, The Village, Prestbury

UPDATE PREPARED

11 April 2011

CONSULTATIONS

Environment Agency – No objection subject to conditions. The development must be carried out in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment. Conditions are recommendations in terms of safe routes in and out of the site, appropriate finished floor levels, and ecology of the river corridor.

English Heritage - In response to additional information received English Heritage have maintained their objection to the proposal stating: *“In pre-application discussions we have pointed the applicant in a direction which would maximise the use of the existing Ford house building and site in order to minimise the footprint of the proposed extension to the church, in combination with better use of the other buildings on the church site. We have consistently objected to the demolition of Ford house as part of the scheme and have encouraged the applicant to find other solutions on the site which would retain Ford House”.*

APPLICANTS SUBMISSION

- A letter from the applicant's Heritage Consultant in response to concerns raised by Officers and English Heritage.
- A letter from the applicant's architect in response to the concerns raised by English Heritage.
- Schedule of works and costings for proposed works to the Norman Chapel, Hearse House and St Peter's south porch (confidential).
- Costings for works to Ford House (confidential)
- Landscaping proposal to Ford House site
- Expression of willingness to enter into negotiations with the Council regarding commuted sums for public open space and youth facilities
- Copy of results from Parish Council Survey.
- Details of the intended community use of the church extension
- Note on the history of the Village Youth Club

- Comment on wider community role of the church and link to proposal
- List of groups utilising Ford House at time of closure in March 2007.

Supporting Information

A list of groups that were utilising Ford House at the time of its closure in 2007 has been submitted, which indicates that the majority of those bodies previously utilising the building were church based. The submitted details indicate that the ***proposed church extension*** will be used for purposes which include:

- Use in association with church services
- Choirs, young church, meetings by church based groups.
- Use by outside groups (e.g. local health trust) and activities

Bookings will be coordinated via the Parish office and via the website.

The supporting information notes that the Ecclesiastical Parish of Prestbury is far larger than the Civic Parish and includes parts of the airfield of Woodford and Poynton Industrial Estate to the north and to the edge of Macclesfield to the south. New initiatives required are detailed and it is stated that to facilitate this work a new post of Community and Youth Minister is being funded by the Parish of Prestbury to start work in September.

The Parish office in the rebuilt Ford House will provide permanent accommodation for the administrative support for the existing and new work the church undertakes. The office is where the churches weekly bulletin that conveys community news and information for the whole community is printed and distributed by a team of helpers to the shops, schools, restaurants and community buildings across the Parish. The parish office is a communication hub not only for the Church but for the wider community.

The Reverend notes the Church delivers over a thousand hours of work with children and young people each year through its many groups. The expanding number of groups operating, the very large numbers of children we work with and the increasing demand for involvement in schools has lead them to recognise the need to employ someone to work with children, families and schools. This new worker to be employed when the building project is completed; firstly so there is the physical space for extra children and secondly the worker would be accommodated in one of the Ford House flats and the rent from one of the other flats would provide half the salary the other half coming from the church and a local trust.

Key Issues

The benefits to the church arising from this proposal are clear. The wider community benefits have been outlined by the applicant, and whilst they are focussed around the church, there is the potential for the extension to the church to be utilised by groups from outside of the church.

Should Members be minded to approve the application, the applicants have indicated a willingness to make some contribution to the provision of public open space and / or the provision of youth facilities, however further discussion will be required on this matter. The key issue with this, as with the application overall, is for Members to consider what level of community facility is provided for within the proposals.

Amenity

The original report to Committee did not refer to the relationships between the new buildings that are proposed. The Ford House building will have habitable room windows facing towards the blank gable wall of the new dwellings behind, with only 5.5 metres between them, which is clearly well below the distance guidelines contained with policy DC38. However, the rooms of flats 1 and 3 have side facing windows that will provide adequate light and outlook, and the rear facing window of flat 2 does provide some outlook past the front corner of the dwellings, which is considered to be acceptable, and adequate living conditions are considered to be provided.

Archaeology

The Council's archaeologist initially advised that pre-determination evaluation work should be carried out at the Ford House site, due to its geographical position. However, whilst the pre-determination work around the church has been requested and carried out due to the particular sensitivities of the site, it is considered that a more pragmatic approach is appropriate for this site. The Council's Archaeologist has now confirmed that it is acceptable to secure the trenching and any subsequent mitigation (excavation, watching brief, etc) that proves necessary by condition.

Trees / Landscaping

A landscaping plan has been submitted that proposes 4 replacement trees, 2 to the front and 2 to the rear of the site, additional low level planting to provide permanent screening and a boundary hedge to the north east corner of the site to mitigate for the impact of the loss of screening by the proposed tree losses. Further meadow and wetland planting is also proposed together with lawned areas in the shared amenity space to the rear.

Clearly, the replacement planting will not initially be of a comparable amenity value to the trees that will be lost as part of the proposed development; however, they will contribute to the overall screening of the development. The loss of the existing trees of amenity value is a harmful aspect of the proposal, and is contrary to policy DC9 of the Local Plan.

Design

Whilst the original report identified that the design of the properties is acceptable, and this is still considered to be the case in detailed design terms, upon further examination of the plans concern is raised over the height of the dwellings. This is particularly in the context of the replacement Ford House building. Revised plans have been submitted to correct an issue with spot levels provided. However the plans still indicate that the dwellings will have a similar ridge height to the new Ford House, which equates to a ridge height of

12 metres, which is substantial even for three-storey buildings. This height appears to be a combination of the three-storey accommodation, a steep roof pitch due to the stone tiled roof and raised finished floor levels to prevent flooding issues. The result is a height / mass of building which does not respect the natural topography and does not step down with the levels of the site. It is considered that it would be more appropriate for the new dwellings to step down from the height of Ford House, allowing this building to be the dominant structure within the site. This would also reduce the visual impact of the buildings from the public vantage points within the Conservation Area.

The concern regarding the height of the buildings has been raised with the applicant, and confirmation on the heights is awaited.

Heritage Considerations

National policy (PPS5) requires that the loss of any designated heritage asset requires a clear and convincing justification; the more significant the heritage asset, the greater the justification will need to be.

It does appear to be a shared view between English Heritage, the Council's Officers and the applicant that the proposal does not technically amount to enabling development as it is identified in English Heritage guidance. However, the heart of the applicant's submission is that the extension to the church can only take place on the back of this proposed development at Ford House, and therefore the applications are strongly connected. Their contention is that holistically the proposals will offer substantial public benefits by providing funds for the enhancements at St Peter's Church and securing the future viability and sustainability of a heritage asset of exceptional significance

The proposal to replace Ford House has been identified as the most cost effective option, as opposed to refurbishment. The refurbishment will amount to the remaining load bearing walls being stripped back to brick, underpinning of the whole structure, excavation to provide undercroft parking and new roof structure. This option is a riskier and costlier option than complete demolition due to the greater number of unknown elements.

Demolition is the applicant's preferred option due to cost (the Charities Act 2006 is cited as a consideration here, which requires trustees to obtain the best price in reasonable circumstances), the amount of return on the investment required to fund the church extension, and access considerations. As outlined in the original report, alternative accesses have been examined and then discounted for the reasons stated. The applicants have therefore gone some way to demonstrating that there will be no other means of delivering the scheme other than by the demolition of Ford House.

However, the figures submitted in the detailed costing for the building of the 11 residential units appear to indicate that a viable scheme could be achieved with fewer residential units on the site. If that is the case then a much improved scheme reducing the scale of the town houses on the rear section

of the site could be achieved. Clarification on this point is being sought with the applicant.

The harm arising from the loss of the Locally Listed Building is considered to be primarily due to the loss of historic fabric, as opposed to any visual harm, given that the replacement building is almost a direct replica of the existing. The visual function of the building at the head of The Village will be retained, which is a key consideration in the assessment of the impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the extent of works that are required to the existing Ford House building (as outlined in the options appraisal), do serve to question the significance of the historic fabric. The building does not merit the status of a national listing, whereas many of the surrounding buildings are nationally listed.

A repair option has been investigated by the applicants, which indicates that it is possible to repair the building, however, the policy test (Local Plan policy BE20) is whether the building is beyond reasonable repair. The cost of this repair is clearly a limiting factor to the future of the building and the potential of the site.

It is also worth noting at this point that the applicants have submitted the results of a survey carried out by Prestbury Parish Council (the civic parish not the ecclesiastical parish), which received a response rate of 52% (711 forms). This survey indicates overwhelming support for the demolition of Ford House.

Members will also wish to have regard to the comments from English Heritage who have maintained their general objection in principle to the demolition of Ford House.

Other considerations

The Environment Agency has raised no objections to the proposal subject to conditions relating to the implementation of measures detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment, and the creation of a buffer zone along the River Bollin to prevent encroachment onto the river.

CONCLUSION

The demolition of Ford House is considered to be contrary to policy BE4 of the Local Plan. The loss of trees of amenity value is contrary to policy DC9 of the Local Plan. The proposed town houses at the rear of the site would not preserve the appearance of the conservation area by virtue of their height and lack of sympathy to the topography of the site, and would therefore be contrary to policies BE1, BE3 and DC1 of the Local Plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There are material considerations in favour of this proposal, specifically relating to the church/wider community benefits that would be funded by this proposal and the future sustainability of the high value heritage asset (St Peters Church). However, it is considered that these

benefits do not outweigh the policy objections, in particular because it is considered that a redevelopment on the Ford House site could be secured that would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area by reducing the scale of the town houses within the grounds of Ford House.

.

NORTHERN PLANNING COMMITTEE – 13th APRIL 2011

UPDATE TO AGENDA

APPLICATION NO: 11/0274M

LOCATION: 106 Buxton Road, Macclesfield

UPDATE PREPARED 11 April 2011

REPRESENTATIONS

- Following the preparation of the report on 1 April 2011, a consultation response from the Strategic Highways Manager has been received indicating that there are no objections to the proposals.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

The highway safety implications of the development have been duly considered in the officer's report. The consultation response from the Strategic Highways Manager supports the conclusions within the report.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the original report on this agenda, it is considered that the impact on highway safety is acceptable. The recommendation remains for one of approval, subject to conditions.