

Application No: 13/0136N

Location: NORTH STREET METHODIST CHURCH, NORTH STREET, CREWE, CW1 4NJ

Proposal: Demolition of existing church building, erection of church community centre and 18 affordable retirement apartments and associated access and car parking provision.

Applicant: Malcolm Lorimer, Wulvern Housing Ltd and Trustees for Met

Expiry Date: 03-Apr-2013

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to conditions and a S106 Agreement

Main issues:

- Principle of development
- The impact of the design
- The impact upon amenity
- The impact upon highway safety and parking
- The impact upon protected species
- Affordable housing issues
- Drainage and flood risk
- Landscape and trees

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to the Southern Planning Committee as it is a major development involving over 10 residential units.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site relates to the North Street Methodist Church itself and land to its rear on the southern side of North Street, Crewe, within the Crewe Settlement Boundary.

The planning application site comprises a level, regular shaped parcel of land amounting to some 0.26 hectares in area. The frontage part is occupied by the Church building and its associated meeting rooms. The present North Street church was built in 1901, extended in 1930 and a new entrance hall and vestries were built circa 1976 though there is a notation on a map of 1875 of a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel being on the site. Alterations to the vehicular access to the church and land to the rear also were approved in 1976. To the

rear of the church extends a parking area and beyond that an informal open area of grassland.

To the south-east of the church building is a row of three storey properties, Church Mews, which also front onto North Street and share an access with the church. The gated parking area to these dwellings also shares an access with the church and this arrangement will of course continue under the present proposals. To the north west of the church, in the opposite direction to Church Mews a ribbon of two storey dwellings extends along North Street, whilst surrounding the application site to the rear are two storey properties on the westerly side (these houses front onto Cashmere Drive) and two pairs of semi detached bungalows on the southerly (rearmost) boundary fronting onto Churchmere Close. Immediately on the opposite side of the road to the church building, on North Street, is the Horseshoe Inn, which is a building included on the Council's Local List of Buildings of Historic Importance. The church building itself is not included either on the Local List or the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the demolition of an existing church. The site will be redeveloped by the provision of a replacement church community centre building approx 15.6 metres by 15.6 metres in floor plan and 7.5 metres to its apex (excluding the cross). The building will front onto North Street and be provided with 12 car parking spaces to the immediate rear and a 2 car space dropping off point at the side adjoining the access road.

To the rear of the church community centre and parking provision an access road will be formed to serve the three storey "T"-shaped block of 1 affordable retirement units which it is proposed to build. The residential apartments will comprise:-

Ground Floor

- 4 No. 2 bed units (each 59 m² in area)
- 2 No. 1 bed units (each 52 m² in area)

First Floor

- 4 No. 2 bed units (each 58/59 m² in area)
- 2 No. 1 bed units (each 49 m² in area)

Second Floor

- 4 No. 2 bed units (each 58/59 m² in area)
- 2 No. 1 bed units (each 49m² in area)

The apartments will be of brick construction with grey tiled roofs, matching the materials to be used on the church community building.

The access road terminates with a vehicular turning head suitable for service vehicles and close by a purpose built bin storage building is proposed. 12 dedicated parking spaces will be

provided to serve the apartments. The development contains a series of landscaped incidental open spaces.

Access will be maintained to the bowling green immediately adjoining the application site as part of the proposed development.

RELEVANT HISTORY

7/02487 - Alteration of existing vehicular access to car park to place of worship – Approved 16th December 1976

POLICIES

National policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Local Plan Policy

NE.9 (Protected Species)
BE.1 (Amenity)
BE.2 (Design Standards)
BE.3 (Access and Parking)
BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)
RES.2 (Unallocated Housing Sites)
TRAN.4 (Access for the disabled)
TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards)
CF.2 (Community Facilities)
CF.3 (Retention of Community Facilities)

Other material considerations

Pre-application letter provided by Cheshire East Council

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Strategic Highways Manager – No objections subject to a condition ensuring the development is constructed in accordance with the submitted plans, the prior submission of an amended design for the revised access to include radius kerbs and tactile paving. An informative advising the developer of the need to enter into a Section 184 Agreement with the Council is also recommended.

Environmental Health – No objections, subject to conditions relating to; hours of construction, lighting, dust control and an informative relating to contaminated land.

United Utilities – No objections, subject to the site being drained on a separate system and surface water discharge requirements

VIEWS OF THE PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL

N/A

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

12 neighbouring properties have objected to the proposal. The relevant main areas of concern relate to;

- Loss of historical building
- Amenity – Loss of privacy / overlooking, loss of light, noise, pollution
- Highway safety – Increase in traffic, pedestrian safety
- Design – Overdevelopment of site, not in keeping with area, does not follow established building line

A number of other concerns have also been raised but these are not material considerations in relation to the determination of this application.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Design and Access Statement
Contaminated Land Questionnaire
Demolition plan

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The proposed scheme can be split into 2 different forms of development:

- a) The demolition of a church and the construction of a new community centre and;
- b) The provision of a residential retirement apartments.

a) Demolition of church and construction of new community centre

Coppenhall Methodist Church, North Street, Crewe is not a listed building and is not on the list of buildings of local interest. As such, the demolition of such a facility shall be determined under the community facilities Local Plan Policies CF.2 and CF.3.

Policy CF.3 of the Local Plan advises that *'proposals which would result in the loss of community facilities which make a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of a community will not be permitted unless a suitable alternative provision is made.'*

As the proposal would include the erection of a replacement community facility, in conjunction with the associated facility on Bradfield Road, it is considered that the development would adhere with Policy CF.3

Policy CF.2 refers to new community facilities. It is advised that for such facilities, there should be; satisfactory highways access (in accordance with Policy BE.3), is in close proximity to existing public transport routes, an appropriate level of car parking is provided, the development is sympathetic to the character of the street and it would not significantly deter from the character of the area or the amenity of local residents. These issues are considered later in the report.

b) Erection of self-contained retirement flats (18 units)

As the proposed development would be for 100% affordable housing located within the Crewe Settlement Boundary, it would be subject to Policy RES.2 of the Local Plan. Policy RES.2 advises that *'within the settlement boundaries of Crewe and Nantwich, which are defined on the proposals map, the development or redevelopment of unallocated sites for housing will be permitted, (In accordance with policies BE.1-BE.5).'*

As such, the principle of the development is accepted and the determination is made on general local plan policies.

The recently published National Planning Policy Framework replaces PPS3 and one of its core principles is that planning should:

*"proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the **homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made to objectively identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth."***

As such, the principle of new dwellings within the Settlement Boundary is deemed to be acceptable with regards to the NPPF.

Design Standards

The new community building would measure approximately 15.6 metres in depth, 15.6 metres in width and approximately 7.5 metres in height. This would be of a similar footprint of the existing church but smaller in height.

The surrounding development consists of a mixture of terraced, semi and detached properties that are a mixture of single, two and three storey's tall. As such, the surrounding area is characterised by a mixed form of development, although all have predominantly open brick finishes with either dual-pitched or hipped roof types.

It is considered that the erection of a detached, single-storey, open brick pyramidal pitched roofed community centre would be of an appropriate design subject to the use of materials that would respect the surroundings. This can be secured by condition.

The proposed residential development would be of a 'T-shaped' design and sit centrally within the plot. It would be 3-storey's tall and have a hipped roof. Given the mixed nature of the surrounding development, it is not considered that subject to the use of appropriate materials, the proposal would appear incongruous within the streetscene and respect the local character. Furthermore, the development would be inset by approximately 40.8 metres from North Street.

A degree of shared open space would be provided within the site, sufficient for a development of this size. A bin store is also proposed which is an important aspect.

As a result of the above reasons, it is considered that the design of the scheme would adhere with Policy BE.2 of the Local Plan.

Amenity

With regards to neighbouring amenity, Policy BE.1 of the Local Plan advises that development shall only be permitted when the proposal would not have a detrimental impact upon neighbouring amenity in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, visual intrusion or environmental disturbance.

The closest residential properties to the development site are; No.27 North Street to the west, any residential occupiers of The Horse Shoe Inn to the north and the residents of the closest property of Church Mews to the east.

The proposed community centre would be approximately 7.3 metres to the east of No.27 North Street. At present, the existing church is approximately 6 metres away from this neighbour in largely the same position. As such, given that the new community centre would be lower in height than the existing building and further away, it is not considered that the building would create any new amenity issues than the existing church. No windows are proposed on the relevant side elevation of the building.

The Horse Shoe Inn, a locally listed building, would be approximately 18 metres across the road. Again, given that the existing church is the same distance from this public house as the proposed building, and as the proposal would be lower in height than the church, it would not have an effect upon amenities.

On the side elevation of the closest Church Walk property, which would be approximately 10.2 metres to the east of the community centre, there are no windows, as such; no new issues in terms of loss of privacy, loss of light or visual intrusion would be created.

The closest neighbouring residential properties to the proposed apartment building would be the rear elevations of No's 27, 29 and 31 Cashmere Drive, the closest of which (No.27) would be approximately 14.2 metres from the closest elevation of the proposed unit.

Paragraph 3.9 of the Development on Backland and Gardens SPD advises of the recommended separation standards for new development in Crewe and Nantwich. It is advised that ideally, a distance of 21 metres should be achieved between principal elevations and a distance of 13.5 metres should be achieved between a principal elevation with windows to habitable rooms and blank elevations. In the case of flats, there should be 30 metres between principal elevations with windows to first floor habitable rooms.

Given that the rear elevations of No's 27 and 28 Cashmere Drive are over the recommended 13.5 metre separation distance from the closest blank gable elevation of the proposal and over the recommended 21 metre standard between principal windows, it is not considered that these neighbour's would be impacted by a loss of amenity.

The rear elevation of No.30 Cashmere Drive would be directly 29.5 metres away from the principal frontage of the site. Although this is below the 30 metre standard, it is only slightly below this recommended gap and as such, is deemed to be acceptable in this instance, as any impact on amenity arising from the shortfall would be indiscernible.

The closest neighbouring properties to the rear of the plot are No's 8 & 9 Churchmere Drive, a pair of semi-detached bungalows. The rear elevation of No.8 Churchmere Drive to the development would be approximately 14 metres from the closest blank gable elevation, adhering to the separation standards. The rear elevation of No.9 Churchmere Drive would be approximately 23.7 metres from an elevation containing a number of principal windows. This separation distance adheres with the 21 metre standard that applies in this instance.

A detached bin store would be erected in the south-eastern corner of the site, approximately 8.2 metres away from the rear elevation of No.8 Churchmere Drive. Although this is below the recommended 13.5 metre separation gap, it would be predominantly offset from this neighbouring property, significantly reducing its impact upon this neighbour in term of visual intrusion.

There would be no other residential properties within close proximity that would be within the recommended separation distances. As such, subject to the height of the proposed outbuilding and its boundary treatment, it is considered that the proposal would adhere with Policy BE.1 of the Local Plan.

With regards to both proposals, Environmental Health were consulted and they have advised that they have no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions relating to hours of construction, lighting, dust control and an informative relating to contaminated land.

Highway safety

The access would remain unchanged from the existing arrangement and as such, is deemed to be acceptable. In terms of public transport, it would be located close to a bus stop running in both directions on North Street.

The submitted plan includes 24 parking spaces in total (including the retirement apartment parking), and an elongated drop-off bay to the site of the proposed replacement community centre.

The Council's Strategic Highways Manager has advised that he has no objections subject to a condition to ensure the development would comply with the internal layout details shown on Mayflower drawing 1974:01 and a Section 184 Agreement. A condition requiring that the developer submits an amended design for the revised access to include for radius kerbs and tactile paving on the pedestrian desire lines along North Street is also recommended.

In addition, an informative is proposed to advise the developer that they must enter into a Section 184 agreement with the Council to provide a new vehicular crossing over the highway verge and to include radius kerbs and tactile paving.

As such, subject to these conditions, it is considered that the development would adhere with Policy BE.3 of the Local Plan.

Protected Species

The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The Directive only allows disturbance, or deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places

- (a) in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment, and provided that there is
- (b) no satisfactory alternative and
- (c) no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range.

The UK has implemented the Directive in the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 2010 (as amended) which contain two layers of protection (i) a requirement on Local Planning Authorities ("LPAs") to have regard to the Directive's requirements above, and (ii) a licensing system administered by Natural England and supported by criminal sanctions.

Local Plan Policy NE.9 states that development will not be permitted which would have an adverse impact upon species specially protected under Schedules 1, 5 or 8 of the wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), or their habitats. Where development is permitted that would affect these species, or their places of shelter or breeding, conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to:

- Facilitate the survival of individual Members of the species
- Reduce disturbance to a minimum
- Provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain the current levels of population

Circular 6/2005 advises LPAs to give due weight to the presence of protected species on a development site to reflect EC requirements. "This may potentially justify a refusal of planning permission."

The NPPF advises LPAs to conserve and enhance biodiversity: if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) or adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused.

Natural England's standing advice is that, if a (conditioned) development appears to fail the three tests in the Habitats Directive, then LPAs should consider whether Natural England is likely to grant a licence: if unlikely, then the LPA should refuse permission: if likely, then the LPA can conclude that no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations.

As part of the application submission, the applicant has submitted a bat survey. The Council's Nature Conservation Officer has reviewed this survey and advised that he is satisfied with it. However, he has recommended a number of conditions to protect nesting and breeding birds. Specifically, a condition requesting a detailed survey be conducted to check the site for nesting birds before any works take place between 1st March and 31st August in any year, and a condition requesting the submission of features for the use by breeding swifts and roosting bats have been suggested.

Subject to these conditions, it is considered that the development would adhere with Policy NE.9 of the Local Plan.

Affordable Housing

As the proposed residential aspect of this proposal is for affordable housing, this needs to be secured with the use of a Section 106 agreement. The housing is for persons over 55 years of age.

Landscaping and trees

The proposed development does not include any detailed landscaping information. As such, it is proposed that this is secured by condition should the application be approved.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To conclude, it is considered that subject to the appropriate use of materials, the scheme, in its entirety would adhere with both Local and National Planning Policies subject to a S106 agreement to secure the details of the affordable housing.

It would not have an adverse impact upon neighbouring amenity or raise any significant highway/parking issues. The proposal therefore complies with Policies; NE.9 (Protected Species), BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Access and Parking), BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources), RES.2 (Unallocated Housing Sites), TRAN.4 (Access for the disabled), TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards), CF.2 (Community Facilities) and CF.3 (Retention of Community Facilities) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. The development also complies with the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to the following conditions and a Section 106 Agreement to secure the affordable housing element in perpetuity and transfer to a requested provider.

- 1. Standard (Time)**
- 2. Plans**
- 3. Materials to be submitted**
- 4. Hours of construction (Mon-Fri – 08:00 to 18:00hrs, Sat – 09:00 to 14:00hrs, Sun – Nil)**
- 5. Lighting to be approved**
- 6. Scheme of dust control**

- 7. Prior submission of an amended design for the revised access to include radius kerbs and tactile paving**
- 8. Over 55 age limit**
- 9. Landscaping (details)**
- 10. Landscaping (Implementation)**
- 11. Boundary treatment**
- 12. Construction of access in accordance with approved drawing**

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