

Application No: 14/0641N
Location: Moss Square, Delamere, Crewe, CW1 2DF
Proposal: Listed building consent for removal of the church hall and its covered walkway link
Applicant: Steve Cottle, Cheshire East Council in partnership with
Expiry Date: 09-Apr-2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The application should be referred to the Secretary of State with a recommendation to approve with conditions

MAIN ISSUES

**Impact of the development on:-
Principle of the Development
Impact upon the Setting of the Grade II Listed Building
Archaeology**

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to the Southern Planning Committee as the associated planning application is also referred to the Southern Planning Committee.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The site of the proposed development extends to 0.95 ha and is located on an area of existing car-parking which is to the south of Crewe Police Station and Christ Church (a Grade II Listed Building) and to the west of Vernon Way. The development will result in the demolition of the existing Church Hall. The site is within the Crewe Settlement Boundary and Crewe Town Centre Boundary. To the south of the site is retail warehousing occupied by Home Bargains and Dunelm Mill with the associated car-parking. To the east of the site are existing offices and a public house (Hops).

The land is currently level, although the retail units to the south of the site are set at a slightly lower level.

This Listed Building application is associated with planning application 14/0640N.

2. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This is a Listed Building Consent application for the demolition of the Church Hall and covered walkway.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

14/0661S - EIA screening opinion for - Redevelopment of existing car parks for the erection of a Lifestyle Centre (7,682 sqm) incorporating a Library (D1), Day centre (D1) with associated Offices (B1), Leisure centre (D2) with a 4 court Multifunction Sports Hall, Gym, studios, 25m and 17m pools; with vehicle and cycle parking provision, means of vehicular and pedestrian access, servicing, bin storage, plant, electricity sub-station and associated landscaping and public realm provision; involving the removal of the Church Hall and its covered walkway link and partial stopping-up of Crewe Street and opening-up of Moss Square as a through route – EIA not required

4. POLICIES

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

Local Plan policy

BE.2 (Design Standards)

BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions)

BE.11 (Demolition of Listed Buildings)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy

SD1 – Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 – Sustainable Development Principles

SE1 – Design

5. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

English Heritage: Within the context of the Grade II Listed structure the church hall and covered walkway are a 1960's addition which due to its lack of contextual design and visually disruptive impact upon a once enclosed setting and constitute a harmful impact upon the setting and significance of the historic site.

The demolition of the church hall and the covered walkway appear to constitute an enhancement of the significance of the site and therefore satisfies paragraph 131 of the NPPF. There is no objection to the removal of the church hall and walkway provided that great care is taken not to damage any historic fabric during the course of the works.

Given the archaeological potential of the development site in question with regards to remains of the 19th century railway housing, it will be important to condition a report and recording process as part of any approval in line with advice from the County Archaeologist.

Archaeology: There are, a number of issues relating to activities on and around the site over the last century and a half. In particular, the submitted report notes the presence of Christ Church, immediately to the north of the application area, and its surrounding cemetery area. An

examination of the historic mapping indicates that the cemetery has never extended beyond its present southern boundary and, consequently, there does not appear to be any potential for the disturbance of human remains by the development. The application boundary does extend into the cemetery but this is to accommodate new path surfaces and no major ground disturbance is proposed in this area. There should, therefore, be no danger of burials being disturbed, although it would be helpful to remind contractors of the presence of human remains in this area as, if deep excavations prove necessary for unexpected reasons, a formal process will be required to secure a Licence from the Ministry of Justice.

The other consideration concerns the former presence of 19th century housing on the car park area. It is not suggested that this represents a major archaeological constraint or that a large programme of archaeological mitigation is required. This type of housing is, however, typical of the town and whilst aspects of Crewe's industrial heritage have been explored, the remains of the actual houses have not been explored. It is advised that this issue could be addressed by means by a simple strip and record exercise over the footprint of one house and yard (an area of c 6m by 20m) and the recording of details of foundations and activities within the yards. Any such work could be secured by condition and carried out in tandem with the initial groundworks programme. A report will also be required and a suggested wording for the condition is as follows:

No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has agreed a programme of archaeological mitigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme.

6. VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Crewe Town Council: The Town Council welcomes the proposals from Cheshire East Council to build a lifestyle centre in the Town. The Council raises the following points and questions and asks Cheshire East to consider these matters as part of the overall implementation of the project.

1. Full consultation with the public is essential and Cheshire East is asked to make a concerted effort to liaise with groups and users from the disabled community to ensure ongoing input is provided at both planning and construction stages.
2. The Council asks that Cheshire East consider utilising the geothermal heat source under Crewe to reduce the running costs of the centre and to provide for wider connections to the supply.
3. The Council asks that the new building is connected to the rest of the Town through an enhanced network of walking and cycling routes. If possible a direct foot bridge connection to the retail park would be welcomed.
4. There should also be secure and covered cycle storage at the site.
5. The Council wishes to see integration with the public transport network and to have in place sufficient parking provision for the development as a whole.
6. Car-parking issues in general need to be considered carefully. If the site of the existing library is used, then it must not impinge in any way on the Civic Square and War Memorial. The Council wishes to see greater clarity as part of the on-going consultation as to the location and scale of parking provision that will support the needs of the centre and its users.

7. The Council wishes to better understand what the future is for what will be the former library. The building will become redundant once the library moves and the Town as a whole needs to understand what usage will be made of the vacated space.
8. The Council can see the benefit of an integrated library, but raises the question as to whether a separate library would be more beneficial for the town, so as to permit more space for other uses within the centre.
9. The Council wishes to see a statement on the proposed charging regime for chargeable services to be delivered at the centre. Such charges should be affordable for all of the community.
10. The design should have something of a 'wow' factor but should also be sympathetic to the area and especially to the historic Christ Church.
11. The pool will be 25 metres long and 8 lanes wide, is this a suitable replacement for the current Flag Lane facilities and provide for the necessary competition standard.
12. The Council would also wish to see assurances that the Flag Lane Baths once redundant is sympathetically developed and that the façade in particular is not lost to the Town.
13. The Council would wish to see the multi-use space in the building equipped such that facility can host conferences, seminars and conventions. This would include suitable seating, break out areas and appropriate projection and sound systems as an integral part of the build.
14. There should be a well-equipped room (as at the present library) available for local societies to hire for monthly meetings/small exhibitions. If the proposed University Technology College uses the Victoria site, there also needs to be a replacement for the large hall there which is used for large exhibitions etc.
15. The existing library based Family History Room, run by volunteers and well-used, providing an important additional resource to the library, needs protecting, indeed enlarging to form a Family/Local History Study Centre with a large exhibition/education room - not necessarily in the library, but as part of the proposed 'Cultural Quarter'.
16. The site itself is constrained on all four sides and the draft plans attempt to get as much use of the available space as possible. In view of the ambitions for Crewe and its future growth, it is essential that it remains fit for purpose for 50 years and is not found to be inadequate in a few years' time. The design as such may need to incorporate long term options for an extra floor or other means of expansion/development.
17. The Council seek to query whether the combined loss of other facilities is to be greater than the floor area provided by the new site. Crewe is a growing town and is already in need of an expansion of the infrastructure. As indicated at (15) the lack of the potential to expand may prove a hindrance in future.

Members noted comments to be submitted by the Chairman in connection with application 14/0640N (Crewe Lifestyle Centre) expressing that it is recognised that the lifestyle centre will bring benefits to the Town. However, there are serious concerns that the level of parking provision is inadequate especially given proposals to develop the undercroft car park. The facilities do not adequately replace those that will be lost in the Town in scale or extent. Traffic management aspects are unclear and may not be appropriate. The nature of the development does not add to the amenity of the area and the construction/appearance of the development does not enhance the character of the Town.

7. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of objection have been received from 3 local households raising the following points:

- Loss of 250 car parking spaces from the Town Centre
- The existing car parks are well used for the existing Town Centre shops
- Users of the nearby Hilary Centre require the use motor vehicle and the parking on the site
- The development will provide just 30 parking spaces
- The subsidised bus service is not available for all
- There would be no coach parking within Crewe Town Centre
- A multi-storey car park should be provided
- There are no bus stops within the vicinity of the site
- Lack of suitable parking within Crewe Town Centre
- The development will not increase footfall within the Town Centre
- Dangers to cyclists when using the roads within the vicinity of the site
- Pay and display parking will deter users of the proposed development

An objection has been received from HM Courts and Tribunals Service raising the following points:

- The main access for the Ethel Elks Child Contact Centre is located close to Lyon Street. There will be an increase in pedestrian activity especially children on Lyon Street which is frequently used by prison vans and police vehicles. The submitted plans do not indicate adequate crossing facilities. The proposal increases potential pedestrian/vehicle conflict.
- The submitted Construction Management Plan states that Lyon Street will provide access to the construction site. Lyon Street is a key vehicular access route and prison vans require clear uncongested routes. It is essential that access is maintained to the rear of the Courts at all times.
- Details relating to construction management should be subject to condition requiring a Construction Environment Management Plan to secure mitigation.
- Access routes should be maintained for HMCTS parking spaces within the Civic Centre Car Park
- Construction signage should be secured during the construction phase
- Potential noise disruption to the law courts.

A letter of concern has been received from the Autism Network raising the following points:

- Concerns over the impact upon the service for which users are dependent on local parking
- Will there be replacement parking provision?
- Most users have blue badges and will park outside causing parking problems
- Loss of parking

One letter of support has been received from a local resident raising the following points:

- Support the demolition of the Church Hall which has become a focal point for anti-social behaviour
- The demolition work must be carried out carefully to avoid any disturbance of graves within the Church yard

A letter of support has been received from Scottish Widows Investment Partnership raising the following points:

- Support investment within Crewe Town Centre
- The development will support a sustainable, balanced and vibrant town centre
- The proposal is compliant with national policy and the Town Centre first objective
- The development will provide opportunities for all
- The development will provide a boost to the local economy

The full content of the objections is available to view on the Councils Website.

8. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

To support this application the application includes the following documents:

- Demolition Method Statement (Produced by Pozzoni)
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Produced by Kier)
- Ecological Assessment (Produced by JW Ecological Ltd)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Produced by Tree Solutions)
- Heritage Statement (Produced by Peter De Figueiredo)

These documents are available to view on the application file.

9. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

In relation to heritage assets the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional'

Policy BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions) states that developments will not be permitted unless *'the proposal does not detract from the character or setting of the building concerned'*

Policy BE.11 relates to the full or substantial demolition of Listed Buildings. In this case it is not considered that the Policy would apply as this application relates to a 1960's addition which is not included within the Listing for the tower at Christ Church this demolition is not full or substantial.

Impact upon the setting of the Grade II Listed Building

The tower of Christ Church is a Grade II Listed Structure and the Listing states as follows:

'Church tower, 1877 (Pevsner) by J W Stansby, Engineer. Yellow sandstone square tower linked to the mainly brick outer walls of the 1843 church by John Cunningham, which had its roof removed and was gutted in 1978. Tower is of coursed rock faced rubble masonry with reducing angle buttresses. The chevron pattern boarded west door is in a gothic opening, flanked by single shafts, and surmounted by hood mould with stops carved as faces. Above the entrance there is a large window with geometrical tracery. Windows in north and south faces are at two levels, in partly blind arcades formed by shafts, lancet at the lower level and

trefoil headed above. Clock dials to four sides, set in flat diaper panels of square carved masonry blocks. There are treble louvred lancets at bell stage divided by coupled shafts with rings. Octagonal pinnacles with shafts and lancet sinkings form the angles and flank the stepped and crocketed gabled parapet'

In this case the church hall and covered walk way are attached to the walls of the Listed Building and therefore form part of the Listed Building. The Church Hall is a 1960s single-storey flat roofed building with a flat roofed canopy linking it to the Christ Church, both the flat roofed building and the canopy are of no architectural merit and their removal would be seen as an enhancement to the Listed Building and its setting and would comply with Policy BE.9 and guidance contained within the NPPF. This view is supported by the Councils Conservation Officer and English Heritage.

The proposed development would be viewed in relation to the existing Listed Structure and would include detailing such as vertical fins which would tie in with the Buttress detailing on the existing Church. It is considered that the proposed two-storey structure would not have a detrimental impact upon the setting of the Listed Structure due to its scale, separation distance and detailed design (as discussed below). Furthermore no objection has been raised by English Heritage of the Councils Conservation Officer in terms of the impact upon the setting of the Listed Building.

Archaeology

The Councils Archaeologist has analysed the historic maps for this area and the cemetery never extended beyond its present southern boundary and as a result there does not appear to be any potential to disturb human remains.

The application site once included the presence of 19th century housing and there is archaeological potential on this site. The Councils Archaeologist, Conservation Officer and English Heritage all recommend the imposition of a planning condition to secure a scheme of mitigation for this site.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The removal of the church hall and covered link structure would provide an enhancement to the Grade II Listed structure. It is not considered that the development would not have a detrimental impact upon the setting of the Listed Building.

The issue of the archaeological potential of the site can be dealt with through the use of a planning condition.

As the applicant for this Listed Building Consent application is Cheshire East Council it is necessary for the application to be referred to the Secretary of State

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The application be referred to the Secretary of State with a recommendation to APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard 3 years

2. Approved Plans

3. Demolition of the Church Hall and canopy to follow the submitted method statement

4. No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has agreed a programme of archaeological mitigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Planning and Place Shaping Manager has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

Should this application be the subject of an appeal, authority be delegated to the Planning and Place Shaping Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Southern Planning Committee, to enter into a planning agreement in accordance with the S106 Town and Country Planning Act to secure the Heads of Terms for a S106 Agreement.

(c) Crown copyright and database rights 2014. Ordnance Survey 100049045, 100049046.

