

Application No: 14/5667M

Location: The trustee's of Wilmslow congregation of Jehovah's witnesses, 48, KNUTSFORD ROAD, CHORLEY, ALDERLEY EDGE, SK9 7SF

Proposal: Demolition of existing building and out-buildings and construction of new place of Christian worship to replicate existing building

Applicant: The Trustees of Wilmslow Congregation of

Expiry Date: 02-Mar-2015

**SUMMARY:**

The site is outside the Settlement Zone Line of Alderley Edge and within the Green Belt.

The development is not inappropriate development and would have no additional adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this location.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact upon highway safety, visual amenity and residential amenity. The existing building is not recorded as a heritage asset, and the replacement building would be acceptable in design terms and would be more energy efficient and practical, satisfying the environmental sustainability role.

The proposal would satisfy the economic sustainability roles by providing employment through the construction process in the locality.

An improved facility for a specific community use would be created, satisfying the social role of sustainable development.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approve subject to conditions**

**CALL IN**

The application has been called in to Committee by Cllr G Barton, for the following reasons:

- The building in question has historic value within the Chorley community.
- The application is opposed by a number of local residents and by Chorley Parish Council.

**PROPOSAL**

The proposal is for the demolition of existing building and out-buildings and construction of new place of Christian worship to replicate existing building. The scheme involves demolition of outbuildings at the rear of the site, and re-organisation of the car park.

The vehicular access is to be altered by retaining the existing opening as a smaller pedestrian access and creating a new access on the western side of the existing, corresponding to the location of the car park.

The replacement building would be located in a similar position on the site, with a greater width but a simpler plan form. A total of 22 car parking spaces are provided, including 3 mobility spaces.

In terms of the comparison of the existing and proposed buildings, the floor area is slightly less, the ridge height is slightly more (200mm) due to the increased width, and the eaves height and roof pitch are the same.

The application includes a Planning Statement and a building survey report. The agent has also responded to the concerns raised in the consultation replies and comments.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The single storey 218m<sup>2</sup> building is of brick and slate construction and occupies a site of 1080m<sup>2</sup>. It features buff brick quoin and buttress features and has a lower height front section. The church is located within a ribbon of development on the north side of Knutsford Road, with predominantly residential properties in the vicinity but including some commercial premises. There are footways on both sides of the road and a local bus service, and the building is separated from the footway by a low wall.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

11275P Use of former school as place of worship. Granted 16/8/1977

## **NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY**

### **National Policy:**

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 14 and 19.

Paragraphs 28 and 70 support the retention and development of local services and community facilities including places of worship.

Paragraph 135 gives guidance on dealing with proposals affecting a non-designated heritage asset:

*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

Paragraph 136 states that steps should be taken to ensure that the new development goes ahead once the demolition is approved.

Planning practice Guidance section 18a gives further guidance on non-designated heritage assets. It advises that:

*A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage interest for their significance to be a material consideration in the planning process.*

Such assets will normally be identified as part of the Local Plan Process, or by a local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest.

**Development Plan:**

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan – saved policies

BE1 (Design principles for new developments)

BE2 (Preservation of historic fabric)

BE20 (Locally important buildings)

DC1 (High quality design for new build)

DC3 (Protection of the amenities of nearby residential properties)

DC6 (Highways)

DC8 (Landscaping)

DC14 (Noise)

DC46 (Demolition)

GC1 (Green belt- new buildings)

**Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)**

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles

SE 1 Design

SE 2 Efficient Use of Land

SE 5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

SE7 The Historic Environment

SE 9 Energy Efficient Development

SE 12 Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability

EG1 Economic Prosperity

PG3 Green Belt

**CONSULTATIONS:**

Local Member (Cllr G Barton) requests Committee consideration as set out above.

Highways: The strategic Infrastructure manager has no objections to the proposals

Environmental protection: recommend conditions

Chorley Parish Council has no objection to this application but does have some serious concerns about the impact on the surrounding area and neighbours:

1. There does not appear to be a planning notice posted concerning this proposal.

2. Our concern regarding the demolition of this building is that a piece of heritage will be lost to Chorley Parish, although we appreciate the intention to rebuild the Hall using the original brick.
3. From the application we have concerns about the proposed floodlighting, is this form of lighting essential considering the light would be invasive for no 50 and 46?
4. Also, concerning the boundary fence described as Paladin, this is quite industrial in appearance and not really in keeping with the residential area and again the neighbouring properties.
5. Will the new plan provide sufficient parking spaces? Currently there is considerable overflow onto Knutsford Rd.
6. We would also ask for consideration from the contractors during the demolition and rebuilding of the Hall when through traffic and the surrounding neighbourhood will be disrupted.

United Utilities: no objections

### **REPRESENTATIONS:**

At the time of report writing 2 representations have been received which can be viewed in full on the Council website. The objections refer to the need to retain a building of local interest, and raise concerns regarding parking and fencing similar to those raised by the Parish Council.

Specific points raised are:

The drawings for the proposed replacement building show the main part of the building to be significantly wider than the current structure. This will reduce the ability to use the space along one side of the hall for parking, as is the current practice

The proposed layout shows 22 car parking spaces. At their meeting on 1st February 2015 the congregation had parked 37 cars in their car park, with a further 13 cars parked on Knutsford Road. A reduction in the number of off road parking spaces could result in an extra 15 cars on Knutsford Road, which is very busy every day of the week, and where passing traffic regularly exceeds the current speed limit of 30MPH

The existing building is 152 years old and is of local historical importance and value in this part of Chorley Parish and should be repaired, not replaced.

This building, which was the original Lindow School, is over 150 years old, and I believe could be converted internally to suit the needs of the occupants. Within the local area there are 2 buildings of similar age, Brook lane Chapel and Stanley Chapel, both of which have been converted internally but retain the original exteriors. From the occupiers own figures the building could be adapted and improved internally at the same cost as demolition and re-building. Their comments regarding the structural survey are down to their own lack of maintenance of the building whilst in their ownership.

### **APPRAISAL**

The key issues to be considered in the determination of this application are set out below.

## **Principle of Development**

The site lies outside the Settlement Zone Line as designated in the adopted Macclesfield Borough Local Plan and is within the Green Belt.

Under the provisions of adopted Green Belt policies as set out above, and in particular paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the replacement of a building for the same use and not materially larger is regarded as an exception to inappropriate development. This requirement is met in this case, as the building will have a similar visual impact to the existing building.

The footprint of the proposed building is approximately 10% increase over the existing and the height is approximately the same at 6.1 metres, being 200mm higher than the existing.

The impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt is limited by its location within a significantly built up frontage.

Overall the proposal will comply with adopted policies relating to Green belt and the countryside.

The issue in question is whether this proposal represents sustainable development and whether there are other material considerations associated with this proposal, which are a sufficient material consideration to outweigh the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

## **Sustainability**

The National Planning Policy Framework definition of sustainable development is:

“Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves do not mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us. Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate. Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment”

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

**an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

**an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right

time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

**a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### Loss of a heritage asset

It is clear that the existing building constitutes a non-designated heritage asset, by virtue of its previous use as a school, the continued use as a place of worship, and its distinctive design. However it is not recorded as a building of local architectural interest. The importance given to such heritage assets has changed over recent years since the publication of the NPPF and PPG, and this is recognised in policy SE7 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan:

*3. The Council will support development proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets and will seek to avoid or minimise conflict between the conservation of a heritage asset and any aspect of a development proposal by:*

*i. Requiring that the impact of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be properly considered, as these are often equally valued by local communities. There should be a balanced consideration, weighing the direct and indirect impacts upon the asset and its setting, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss. The presumption should be that heritage assets should be retained and re-used wherever practicable and proposals that cannot demonstrate that the harm will be outweighed by the benefits of the development shall not be supported. Where loss or harm is outweighed by the benefits of development, appropriate mitigation and compensation measures will be required to ensure that there is no net loss of heritage value.*

*4. For all heritage assets, high quality design should be achieved. It should aim to avoid poorly executed pastiche design solutions and should foster innovation and creativity that is sensitive and enhances the significance of heritage assets in terms of architectural design, detailing, scale, massing and use of materials.*

The physical impact of the development on the heritage asset would be significant, as it involves the complete demolition of the buildings on site. However they are not considered to be of sufficient visual merit to justify retention as important buildings, given their low height and limited contribution to the street scene. The replacement building seeks to put back a building which reflects the original building, whilst not creating a 'pastiche' referred to in the emerging policy. The cultural impact would be low as a replacement building of similar dimensions is proposed which would continue serving as a community facility.

The applicants have demonstrated that the existing building is not suited to modern use and required extensive modernisation which would cost a similar amount to the new build proposal, but would create a less energy efficient and practical building.

### Design and sustainable construction

The design of the new building is appropriate to its location and the surrounding development. It features a building of similar proportions to the existing and would fit in well with the street scene. It would be built to current Building regulation standards and achieve greater energy efficiency, and would also offer a more accessible design.

The proposed fencing of the site has been raised as an issue. The frontage of the site is to be kept open, and the intention is to upgrade boundary fencing at the same height and style as the existing.

### Residential Amenity

In terms of impact on the adjoining dwellings, the proposed building will have no additional impacts over and above the existing situation, and there is an opportunity to impose suitable conditions on the use as recommended by the Environmental Protection Officer, to include hours of use, external lighting and noise restrictions.

The existing permission dating from 1977 has a use restriction to a place of worship only, which would prevent a change to another use with class D1, including a school, community hall and crèche. However such a restriction is not considered to be reasonable or necessary in view of the former use as a school and the fact that such alternative uses would be equally appropriate in this location.

### Highways

The applicant advised that the catchment area for this hall (the Wilmslow congregation) is fairly small, as there are other Kingdom Halls at Knutsford, Altrincham, Wythenshawe, Stockport, Hazel Grove, Macclesfield and Northwich. Therefore the relatively short journeys are likely to involve shared transport or possibly walking and cycling.

The layout of the car park is acceptable and provides for a more generous turning and manoeuvring space due to the simpler plan form of the new building. It is the general custom during church services for cars to double park where safe to do so, as all of the congregation tend to leave at the same time. Therefore the provision of 22 spaces on site is a minimum figure, and is appropriate for a facility of this size, given the existing use.

The revised access layout will create a separate pedestrian entrance and visibility is retained.

Overall the proposal is considered to be acceptable on highway safety grounds.

## **ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

The proposal will involve new construction which will create a benefit to the local economy.

## **SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

The application will provide for the continued use of a community building serving the locality and will be of benefit to the social fabric on the area.

## **Response to Objections**

The comments referred to have been covered by the assessment of issues above, and are addressed by the recommended planning conditions. The application has been publicised by neighbour notifications and a site notice was not considered to be necessary in this case.

### **Conclusion – The Planning Balance**

The site is outside the settlement zone and within the Green Belt. However it is regarded as appropriate development and can therefore benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact upon visual amenity, built heritage, highway safety and residential amenity, therefore satisfying the environmental sustainability role.

The proposal would satisfy the economic sustainability roles by providing employment in the locality.

The proposal would also meet the social role of sustainable development by providing for the continued use of the community facility in a more sustainable building.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

#### **Approve subject to the following conditions:**

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1. Commencement of development (3 years)
2. Development in accord with approved plans
3. Submission of samples of building materials
4. Landscaping - submission of details
5. Landscaping (implementation)
6. Provision of car parking
7. Construction of access
8. Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
9. Works within the public highway
10. Contaminated Land
11. Contamination
12. Piling
13. Dust management
14. External Lighting
15. Contamination note
16. NPPF

