

Application No: 10/0904M

Location: ST MARTINS CHURCH, SHRIGLEY ROAD NORTH, POYNTON
Proposal: ERECTION OF PARSONAGE (OUTLINE)

For The Parochial Church Council

Registered 08-Mar-2010

Policy Item Yes

Grid Reference 394351 383234

Date Report Prepared: 12 May 2010

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether the proposal is acceptable in the Green Belt

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been called to the Committee by the local Ward Member, Councillor Roger West, citing the issue of conflict between the proposal being contrary to Local Plan policy and the requirement for such a key worker in the Community, as his reasons.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises an area of open land within the grounds of St Martin's Church, Poynton. The site is located within the Green Belt as identified in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks outline planning permission to erect a new parsonage, with all matters reserved except the layout / siting of new dwelling.

RELEVANT HISTORY

40460P - ADDITIONAL CHURCH FACILITIES - Approved 04.04.1985

45445P - TEMPORARY MEETING ROOM FOR 12 MONTHS - Approved 26.06.1986

49570P - TEMPORARY MEETING ROOM FOR 12 MONTHS - Approved 02.07.1987

49583PB - ERECTION OF NEW CHURCH HALL TO REPLACE FORMER STRUCTURE -
Approved 05.08.1987

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy – DP1, DP2, DP4, DP5, DP7, DP9, RDF4

Local Plan Policy - GC1, BE1, DC1, DC3, DC38

Other Material Considerations – PPS3 Housing Self Assessment Checklist

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Strategic Highways Manager - No objections

British Waterways – No comments to make

Poynton Town Council – Decision deferred to Cheshire East Council, but noted that while Councillors would normally object to a proposal for a new dwelling in the Green Belt, there might be exceptional reasons for allowing it. They raise concern over an apparent lack of consultation on the application.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

22 letters from local residents / church members have been received supporting the proposal on the following grounds:

- Lack of community facilities due to closure of post office, butcher and baker
- Will help to address the decline in congregation
- Improved security
- Will enable usage of the facilities to be maintained and overseen
- Construction will provide local employment
- Deeds state that a house should be built on the land at some stage
- Catalyst for more community regeneration
- Dedicated priest for St Martins is best way to serve congregation and community

One letter has been received from the neighbouring property objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Dwelling would create a precedent in the Green Belt
- There have been considerable sewage and drainage problems in the area
- Question motives as there is vacant property in the area.
- The activities at the church hall are not all connected to the church and do not justify a parsonage after 90 years without one.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A copy of the Church of England's publication entitled "Parsonages: A Design Guide" (commonly referred to as "The Green Guide") has been submitted. This was produced by Church Commissioners in December 1998 as a design guide for building new parsonages to set out exactly what is required for such new buildings. A copy of this document can be viewed in full on the application file.

A design and access statement has also been submitted on behalf of the applicant. The statement outlines that the church is currently served by a minister who lives near the parish church of St. Georges in Poynton, and the services held at St Martins are conducted on a rota basis by church staff and retired clergy living within the parish. The present key holder is also due to retire, and it is imperative that continuous leadership and pastoral care is provided by a resident clergy acting as key holder and overseeing activity

at the site. The dwelling is required to meet the needs of the congregation and community with a view to expanding the congregation. The dwelling needs to be on the site to allow appropriate access for parishioners and privacy for the clergy family, and to meet the requirements of the Green Guide. Similarly, existing housing in the locality does not meet the standards set out in the Green Guide as it does not meet the standards set out in the Green Guide as it lacks the necessary accessibility and privacy.

A supporting letter from the Bishop of Stockport, on behalf of the Diocese of Chester, has also been submitted with the application which notes the following:

- When the land was first purchased the deeds expressed a desire to build a complex of church, church halls and a dwelling for a resident minister
- Decisive action needs to be taken to arrest the decline in congregation.
- A part-time priest is therefore needed who can be resident in Higher Poynton and be solely responsible for the Church of St Martin.
- The Diocese of Chester follows national guidelines in maintaining high standards for clergy housing (access for parishioners and privacy for family) which means it is unlikely that suitable accommodation could be found on the market elsewhere.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Green Belt

As a new dwelling in the Green Belt, the proposal is defined as inappropriate development. It is therefore necessary to establish whether “very special circumstances” exist to clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm that may be identified.

An agricultural worker’s dwelling is an example where a new dwelling can, in some cases, be justified in the Green Belt. The current proposal should be assessed in a similar way, by examining whether the nature and demands of the work concerned make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at the site of their work.

The reasons put forward by the applicant for requiring a new dwelling include meeting the needs of the congregation and community with a view to expanding the congregation, and without it the future of the church is threatened. It is suggested that the dwelling needs to be on the site to allow appropriate access for parishioners and privacy for the clergy family, and to meet the requirements of the Green Guide. For an agricultural worker, the reasons for justifying a dwelling on site are commonly animal welfare, or to deal with out of hours emergencies. Such issues cannot be dealt with in a timely fashion if the farmer lives off site. In this case, it is not entirely clear why the minister needs to live on site, what exactly a resident minister will bring to the church, what are the nature and demands of the minister’s work that make it essential for a 24 hour presence on the site and why their function cannot be carried out off site. Similarly, specific examples of why off site accommodation in the area is not suitable for the purposes of the church have not been submitted.

Existing dwellings on the market have been generally discounted as they do not provide the necessary access for parishioners or privacy for the clergy family, and they do not meet the standards in the Green Guide. However, in the section of the Green Guide that refers to site selection, it is stated as “very desirable” that the Church is within 10 minutes walk. This does not imply that the dwelling must be located on the site. In fact the same section of the Green Guide recommends that the dwelling is not physically attached to the church or parish buildings for reasons of privacy and future saleability. Reference to future

saleability raises questions regarding the long term prospects of the dwelling for ecclesiastical purposes, and the true requirement for a dwelling.

Overall, whilst the objectives of providing a dwelling to accommodate a resident minister to promote the church are understood, the information submitted is not considered to demonstrate a fundamental need for somebody to be present on the site at all times, nor why any need that does exist cannot be provided by existing accommodation in the vicinity of the site. It is therefore concluded that the very special circumstances required to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt caused by inappropriate development have not been demonstrated in this case. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

Housing

The location of the site is beyond the distances to a food shop, post office, bank, medical facilities, etc, recommended in the North West regional; Assembly's Sustainability Toolkit, and is therefore not in the most sustainable of locations. However, having regard to the nature of the proposal and the close proximity of a regular bus service, if Members are minded to accept the proposal in Green Belt policy terms, then it is considered to be unreasonable to object on sustainability grounds.

Character

The dwelling is to be located at the northern end of the application site adjacent to an existing dwelling at 6 Shrigley Road North. Notwithstanding the objection on Green Belt grounds above, in the context of the street scene and general character of the area the siting of the building is considered to be acceptable. The appearance of the dwelling has been reserved for subsequent approval, and the Conservation Officer has objected due to there being insufficient information to assess the impact upon the Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area (opposite). However, due to the outline form of the application, this is not considered to be a justifiable reason for refusal.

Amenity

The siting of the building is such that a dwelling could be erected without undue harm to the amenity of 6 Shrigley Road North or any other nearby properties.

Highways

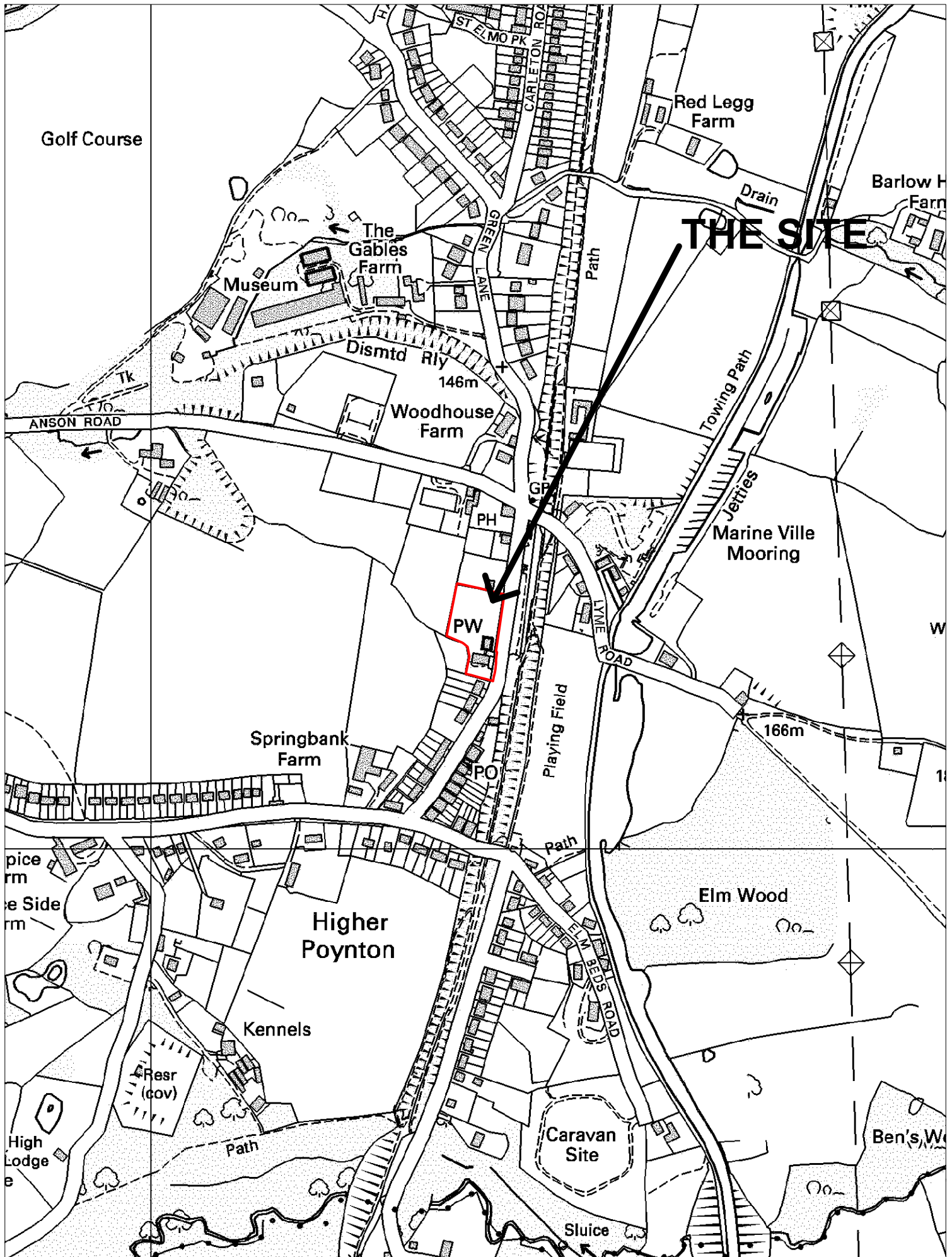
Details of the proposed access have also been reserved for subsequent approval, and the Strategic Highways Manager raises no objections to the proposal on the basis of the information submitted.

Ecology

The Nature Conservation Officer does not anticipate any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The comments received in both support and objection have been give due consideration, however, by virtue of the proposal representing an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt, and very special circumstances not having been demonstrated, a recommendation of refusal is made.



ST MARTINS CHURCH, SHRIGLEY ROAD NORTH, POYNTON
NGR - 394,362 : 383,209

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Application for **Outline Planning**

RECOMMENDATION : Refuse for the following reasons

1. R04LP - Contrary to Green Belt / Open Countryside policies