

**P/13/0575/FP**

LOCKS HEATH FREE CHURCH

**TITCHFIELD COMMON**

AGENT: ROWAN & EDWARDS  
LTD

ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING CHURCH TO PROVIDE NEW  
WORSHIP AREA, ACTIVITY HALL WITH ADDITIONAL CAR PARKING

LOCKS HEATH FREE CHURCH 255 HUNTS POND ROAD TITCHFIELD COMMON  
FAREHAM PO14 4PG

***Report By***

Kim Hayler (2367)

***Amendments***

As amended by Layout Plan received 21 August 2013

***Site Description***

Locks Heath Free Church is located on the northeast side of Hunts Pond Road south of the junction with Prelate Way. The Church was permitted in 1998 and comprises a single building set back on its site with the main area of car parking between the building and the Hunts Pond Road frontage.

To the northwest a Greenway links Hunts Pond Road with Ascot Close to the rear. A belt of mature oak trees run along the rear (northeast) boundary of the site. The trees to the rear of the existing church are protected by Fareham Tree Preservation Order No.154 and are located just outside of the site boundary.

The Hunts Pond Road frontage is quite open to view. When approached from the south the existing Church building is set against the backdrop of trees and of adjacent residential dwellings. The properties in Ascot Close to the rear are sited in excess of 50 metres from the site boundary and the nearest property in Hunts Pond Road is sited 12 metres from the site boundary.

***Description of Proposal***

The development proposals seek the extension of the Church site to the southeast to enable the construction of a multipurpose building incorporating a 'sanctuary' (described as an 'auditorium' in the previous application), activity hall, small meeting rooms, coffee shop and administrative area. The new building would be linked to the existing building. Additional car parking is proposed on the southeast side of the site and would be set back from the Hunts Pond Road frontage.

The applicants state that the application is principally for a D1 use (for, or in connection with, public worship or religious instruction) with ancillary functions.

The whole site would amount to 0.8 hectares in area with the additional land comprising approximately 0.56 hectares of that. The floor area of the existing building measures 692 metres square and the floor area of the proposed new building would measure 1660 square metres. The new building would measure 9.5 metres high and would be set back from the Hunts Pond Road frontage roughly in line with the existing Church building.

The existing car parking area to the front of the Church would be extended across the front

of the new building and sweep around to an extended area to the southeast of the new building. The total proposed on site car parking provision would be 152 spaces. The overspill area proposed in the previous, refused, application has been removed from the proposal.

### ***Policies***

The following policies apply to this application:

#### **Approved Fareham Borough Core Strategy**

CS5 - Transport Strategy and Infrastructure

CS9 - Development in Western Wards and Whiteley

CS14 - Development Outside Settlements

CS15 - Sustainable Development and Climate Change

CS17 - High Quality Design

#### **Fareham Borough Local Plan Review**

DG4 - Site Characteristics

### ***Relevant Planning History***

The following planning history is relevant:

<b><u>P/12/0120/FP</u></b>	<b>ALTERATION TO EXISTING BUILDING AND PROVISION OF NEW AUDITORIUM, ACTIVITY HALL AND CAFE WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND CHANGE OF USE OF LAND OPPOSITE NETLEY ROAD FOR USE AS OVERSPILL CAR PARK</b>
	REFUSE                      23/07/2012

### ***Representations***

Two hundred and forty one representations received in support of the proposal:

- Attention is drawn to the planned further development in the western wards of Fareham which will justify the expansion
- Meets planning policies
- Valuable facility for the community
- Important for young people

Forty representations received in objection to the proposal raising the following concerns:

- Scale and capacity are too great and little altered from previous application
- Antisocial activities on Friday nights
- Still insufficient car parking for large events
- Traffic hazard of site egress close to pinch point on Hunts Pond Road
- Will have to be used commercially in order to cover the build costs
- General traffic along Hunts Pond Road is a problem with new developments accessed from it
- Inappropriate development for what is a countryside location
- Development not needed by the local community as a whole
- Harmful to immediate local residents by reason of noise and disturbance
- This is mainly a residential area
- Loss of Green space

- Current building is not always in use - could the uses not be spread over time as opposed to adding more space for very limited functions?
- Changes to the roof design and small parking area are insufficient to reduce the traffic impact of the development
- High level of noise and disturbance from existing uses
- The sanctuaries are still auditoriums by a different name
- The transport assessment suggests that the largest events would be 300 people so why is it necessary to have a higher capacity building?
- Not a high quality design as required by Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy
- The majority of users travel from outside of the immediate area
- Sports facilities are not needed as this need is adequately covered elsewhere.

One petition received with 224 signatures objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- The proposal is not in keeping with the area and fails to take into account the possible destruction on the environment and the reduction in quality of life for the neighbourhood in general;
- Inadequate parking on the site for the development would create havoc in the area around the church;
- The proposal will open the gate to allow green land to be developed at any cost.

### **Consultations**

Director of Planning and Environment (Highways) - This is a proposal to approximately double the capacity of the existing church premises with more than a threefold increase in on-site car parking, improvements to the site access arrangements and the provision of a Travel Plan to seek to maximise sustainable travel to and from the site.

It is considered the overall proposals for parking, access, traffic impact and site management are now acceptable and thus, subject to the commitment to the contents of an agreed Travel Plan and the installation of pedestrian barriers, no highway objection is raised to the application.

Director of Planning and Environment (Arboriculture) - No objection subject to conditions

Director of Planning and Environment (Ecology) - I recently commented on a previous scheme at this site, and the updated ecological information has been provided to reflect the changes to the proposals in this new scheme, and the time lapse between the previous survey and this submission. My comments remain the same as previously.

I have no particular concerns about the proposals. I would, however, suggest that the recommendations of the ecological report are secured by condition.

I would suggest that if external lighting is to form part of the development, an appropriate scheme is secured by condition.

Finally, if a landscape planting plan is to be secured by condition, I would again suggest that the condition wording incorporates the need for the planting to be native, locally appropriate, and of benefit to wildlife.

Environment Agency - No objection.

Southern Water - No objection subject to informatives.

Hampshire Constabulary (Crime Prevention Design Advisor) - The proposal shows a pedestrian access from the footpath (running along the northern boundary) into the grounds. This provides an opportunity for a short cut through the car park, which increases the vulnerability of the car park to crime. Therefore, in the first instance I would recommend that this access is removed and the boundary treatment continued along the entire length of the footpath. However, if this is not desirable I would recommend the installation of gates across this access so that access to the church grounds can be controlled if necessary. The gates should be: of robust construction, at least six feet high, constructed in such a fashion that they do not aid climbing over the gate and fitted with a key operated lock.

The proposal shows several cycle stores and a cycle parking area. The two cycle stores are not well over looked (one can easily be accessed from the footpath) therefore, I recommend the provision of lockable cycle stores. The cycle parking area is very close to the footpath to provide some protection for the cycles I recommend the installation of cycle anchor points. Any planting should be such that it does not restrict the visibility of the cycle stores.

The proposed building has a number of doors located on the rear elevations. These doors have very little natural surveillance which increases their vulnerability to crime; as a result they should be of a design of increased surveillance.

Director of Regulatory and Democratic Services (Contamination) - The application did not include any information relating to land contamination. A previous application included a site investigation report. This along with conversations with the consultant who wrote the report identified an issue with ground gases and a ground gas assessment was recommended by the consultants. This will need to be required as a condition and it will be necessary to remove the permitted development rights so any further additions can be required to include gas protection if necessary or to protect any installed remedial measures.

Director of Regulatory and Democratic Services (Environmental Health) - In December 2012 Environmental Health received a complaint regarding noise from youths hanging around by the door of the church. A complaint about noise from children attending the youth club at the church was received in May 2012, and two earlier complaints about the same were received in February and October 2010. Other than the complaints being made, no further action was taken as no further contact was forthcoming from the complainants.

At the time of writing this consultation response I note that over 250 representations had been made by members of the public. However, only 36 are from local residents (living within 150m or so of the church) and of those 36, 17 have made objections on noise grounds.

The applicant has commissioned a noise impact assessment. I agree with the surveys undertaken by Vanguardia and the recommendation to incorporate sound insulation within the architectural design of the building based on providing sufficient attenuation for a worst case internal sound pressure level of 95 dB(A).

It is understood that the three sets of rear doors to the auditorium and the activity hall are to be self closing and alarmed for emergency use only, and to be steel acoustic fire doors complete with perimeter and threshold seals. This should be made a condition of any planning approval in order to ensure minimal noise break-out from this source.

It is understood that the earlier proposed cafe is now to be a coffee shop. As a result, the potential for odour (and noise) complaints will be reduced. Should the use of the coffee shop change in the future it may be necessary for odour (and noise) control equipment to be installed.

## ***Planning Considerations - Key Issues***

### Introduction

Planning permission was refused (P/12/0120/FP refers) on 23 July 2012 for the alteration to the existing building and provision of a new auditorium, activity hall and cafe with associated car parking and change of use of land opposite Netley Road for use as overspill car parking.

The application was refused at the Planning Committee meeting on 18 July 2012 for the following reason:

The proposed development is contrary to Policies CS5, CS14 and CS17 of the adopted Fareham Borough Core Strategy in that:

On the basis of the information submitted, the scale of the proposed development, particularly the incorporation of a 500 seat auditorium, and its use by separate commercial organisations goes beyond a facility that is necessary to serve the local community.

Whilst the provision of additional car parking to the south is recognised, the proposed car park is too distant from the proposed facilities and other opportunities exist to park closer to the site on the public highway. The scale of the proposed development, in conjunction with the existing building, would therefore lead to parking on nearby roads to the detriment of highway safety and the amenities of local residents. Furthermore on the basis of the submitted information, the local planning authority are concerned as to how the additional car parking area could be made available and controlled when there is pressure to use it by the Church, users of the sports pitches and those attending the allotments. This will further exacerbate problems with vehicles parking on the highway.

The current application has been submitted in order to seek to overcome the previous reasons for refusal. The main changes can be summarised as follows:

- the applicant confirms that the community uses and church based uses which take place within the church premises today will not alter and will be carried over to the new and extended premises;
- the applicant states that no commercial organisations will be hiring the worship area for non-church activities;
- additional car parking will be provided immediately alongside the site rather than at a distance from it.

### Principle of Development

Within the Fareham Borough Local Plan Review the application site is identified as on land, outside of the built up area, but suitable for community, education and recreation uses. The proposed extension to the Church is considered to fall within the definition of a 'community' use so that it is considered to comply with saved policy.

Policy CS9, referring to development within the Western Wards and Whiteley identifies the provision of some 1480 further new dwellings up to 2026; it also encourages the provision

of community facilities to serve this projected local growth. This application meets this policy objective in that it provides flexible community facilities for an increasing local population.

The previous planning application was refused in part because the Members of the Planning Committee considered that the proposal for a 500 seat auditorium and its use would go beyond that necessary to serve the local community. The applicant had also highlighted the fact that the building could be let out for larger functions including conferences and concerts unrelated either to the church or the local community.

Whilst the floor area of the buildings proposed are essentially the same as the previous scheme, the submission clarifies that the proposed use is for Class D1 of the Use Classes Order. More specifically the uses undertaken within the new buildings will be the same as those current uses in the existing church building. These include:

Children craft activities,  
Youth work programme  
Childrens programme  
Sporting activities  
Sports and games for children,  
Parents and toddlers,  
Parenting courses,  
Marriage courses  
Child protection courses  
Counselling and peer group  
After schools club  
Summer Holiday children's club  
'Alpha courses',  
Reading schemes,  
Children's holiday club,  
Youth clubs,  
Seniors club,  
Luncheon club,  
Pre-school,  
Debt counselling,  
Housing association meetings with local residents.

It is considered that any condition restricting the use of the building should also, for clarity, be explicit that the use shall not include letting of space to other hirers for non church/ community uses. A further condition would be appropriate to restrict the use of the 'coffee shop' such that it is not used independently as a day to day facility for the general public.

The applicants advise that the church is already used for larger events with up to 300 attendees, for example at the Children's Christmas service, and these will continue within the more spacious premises.

#### Scale and Design of the Development:

Although the scale of the development was referred to in the previous refusal in relation to the auditorium and its possible use by commercial organisations there was no direct reference to design. Notwithstanding, the applicants have amended the building, the most notable change being the roof form of the auditorium which has been hipped to the northwest and south east.

Some local objectors are of the view that the alterations to the design are insufficient to warrant any change of position, however, as stated there was no previous objection to the design of the extended building.

The building is not set directly against residential properties; to the north residential properties would be separated from the new building and car parking by the existing church building. To the east the building would be screened by mature trees and would measure in excess of 60 metres from the nearest residential properties in Ascot Close. To the west the building would be sited some 50 metres from residential properties on the opposite side of Hunts Pond Road, behind the proposed car parking areas.

The building is functional and is designed to achieve specific purposes including an auditorium; the building has been designed to minimise impact upon local residents by reducing openings and where necessary keeping openings within elevations set away from the nearest residents.

Hampshire Constabulary (Crime Prevention Design Advisor) recommends gating the pedestrian access from the footpath running along the northern boundary of the site, along with making provision for secure cycle parking. At the moment the pedestrian access already exists between the site and the footpath and the proposal will not change the situation. The provision of secure cycle parking can be secured through the imposition of a planning condition.

Officers are satisfied that the design is appropriate and of high quality having regard for the functional constraints involved.

As with the previous application, the building has been designed to achieve good levels of energy efficiency which will exceed regulations through matters such as:

- Air source heat pumps to improve energy use
- Building information board to be a learning resource for building users
- Drinking water dispensers (mains supplied) and cooled to improve the health of users
- A pulsed output from the main incoming water meter, connected to the Building Management System, to detect any leaks and avoid water wastage
- A sanitary area water supply shut off valve activated by proximity detection to reduce water wastage
- Lighting controlled by proximity detection and time control to improve energy usage

Nonetheless, due to the charitable status of the applicants, the added costs of materials and design features and the cost of assessment and monitoring the project cannot realistically meet the aims of Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy to achieve 'excellent' status under BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) for non-residential developments from 2012. Under the circumstances Officers are of the view that with the variability of the use of the building together with the costs involved that must be borne, this is a case where the full achievement of the BREEAM status would be an unreasonable burden.

#### Parking/highway matters

The existing car park has a capacity of 48 cars. The current application proposes

reconfiguring the existing car park and providing additional car parking at the site to accommodate a total of 152 cars.

Local residents point out that significant problems continue to arise, particularly on Sundays, when there is insufficient car parking available on the site, or in combination with parking at the local St.John's School (25 spaces by arrangement with Hampshire County Council). Attendees of the Church overspill into the local roads, causing problems for local residents and safety hazards on the more busy roads, particularly Hunts Pond Road. Objectors note that the proposal now includes expanded car parking on the site of the Church but consider that the total 152 spaces is insufficient given the capacity of the building.

The Director of Planning and Environment (Highways) is satisfied that the proposed car parking in terms of its location and numbers is acceptable subject to the provision of the Travel Plan particularly to address events when large numbers of people are present.

Concern is also raised about the position of the proposed egress from the site and the impact of this and the overall increased traffic level upon Hunts Pond Road. The implications of the proposals upon the highway network have been considered by the Director of Planning and Environment (Highways) who advises that the development would not cause material harm to highway safety.

#### Noise and Disturbance:

A number of nearby residents have raised the issue of noise and disturbance from evening and night time uses, particularly youth events, where behaviour is rowdy when events such as the youth club turn out.

Members will note from the comments of the Director of Regulatory and Democratic Services (Environmental Health) that complaints have been received but that these have been infrequent and have not been followed up by the complainants. The issue was not considered to be sufficient to justify a reason for refusal on the last application.

The principal elements of the proposals have not changed in that the design is such as to take the main entrance to the complex further south away from the closest dwellings. Noise issues are often encountered outside buildings where such uses are undertaken; whether or not the application is permitted the current uses will continue. The new building will provide more internal space for activities to occur but the design and attenuation measures will prevent disturbance from uses within the building.

Officers do not believe the increased size of the building will in itself lead to increased incidents of noise disturbance outside the building during unsociable hours.

#### Conclusion

The site for the proposed extension and car parking to the church is located outside of the defined urban area but within an area identified as suitable for community uses.

In refusing the previous application, Members were concerned that the scale of the proposed building was likely to lead to use by outside commercial organisations, suggesting that the building was beyond that necessary to serve the local community. Members were also concerned about the proposed overspill car park being too distant from the site, which they considered would lead to additional parking on the highway.



The application seeks to address the previous reasons for refusal by confirming that the building will be used only for church and community related uses and additional car parking is now located immediately alongside the buildings.

Officers believe that the proposed development addresses the concerns raised previously by Members and for these reasons it is recommended that the application be permitted subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

### ***PERMISSION***

Use as a place of worship/church hall together with non-commercial community uses and for no other use within Class D1; Details of Materials; Details of drainage; Submission of landscape details; Implementation and maintenance of agreed landscape scheme; Details of hard surfacing area including car park; laying out and retention of car parking; Details of all external lighting to be agreed and implemented before use commences; Travel Plan to be agreed and implemented; Tree protection measures in accordance with submitted and approved method statement; No event or other use, excluding specifically church related, within the building shall finish later than 11pm; Noise attenuation measures as agreed beforehand to be implemented before use commences; gas protection measures; noise conditions; compliance with terms of Phase I Habitat Survey; Details of areas for site offices, construction vehicles, and storage of materials during construction; Means of preventing mud from leaving the site during construction; details of vehicular signage to be agreed, control rear doors, coffee shop to be used ancillary to church use only; details of safety barriers to be approved; secure cycle provision

### ***Background Papers***

P/12/0120/FP

# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL



Locks Heath Free Church  
255 Hunts Pond Road  
Scale 1:1,250



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