

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 7th February 2018

ITEM NO. 12

Ward: Norcot

App No.: 171086/FUL

Address: Grovelands Baptist Church, 553 Oxford Road, Reading

Proposal: Demolition of existing church buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide a four storey mixed use development comprised of community halls and ancillary accommodation at ground floor level, car parking and 2x one bedroom flats and 10 x two bedroom flats at the upper levels.

Applicant: The Trustees of Reading Community Church (now known as 'The Gate')

Date application valid: 11th July 2017

Major Application 13 week target: 10th October 2017

Extended deadline: 28th February 2018

Planning Guarantee 26 week target: 9th January 2018

RECOMMENDATION

171086

REFUSE Full Planning Permission for the following reasons:

1. The design is not considered to provide a high quality replacement building which responds positively to the context and would not maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Its height and massing are inappropriate within the area, overly dominant and overbearing, with a top-heavy appearance, alien features such as the open 'grid' façade, and a top floor considered too tall proportionally compared to the main façade contrary to policy CS7.
2. The proposed height and mass of the building along Wilson Road is considered overly dominant within the streetscene, and would not relate well to the neighbouring residential properties contrary to policy CS7.
3. The raised balconies and terraces at upper floors to the rear would cause overlooking and the perception of overlooking, and loss of privacy, for surrounding residential properties, and will introduce amenity space at a height uncharacteristic in this area contrary to policy DM4.
4. The rear facing windows within the projection closest to Wilson Road would cause overlooking and the perception of overlooking, and loss of privacy, for surrounding residential properties contrary to policy DM4.
5. By virtue of the unacceptability of the design and appearance of the replacement building, the proposed development has failed to justify the loss of the locally important historic building contrary to policy CS33.
6. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure contributions towards employment, skills and training, and securing affordable housing of an appropriate tenure, and 6 no. car parking spaces from the site at land between 2-4 Wilson Road, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough and the need to provide sustainable, inclusive mixed and balanced communities, contrary to policies CS15, DM6 and NPPF. Fails to provide adequate parking provision and therefore controls over the development's parking and highway impacts, contrary to policies CS20, CS24 and DM12. It also fails to adequately contribute to the employment, skills or training needs of local people with associated socioeconomic harm, contrary to policies CS3, CS9, DM3 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013).

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE

7. IF1 Positive and Proactive Working - refusal
8. Refused plans

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site (171086) is situated on the corner of Oxford Road and Wilson Road. The existing main chapel was built in 1899. A smaller hall is situated in the south east corner of the site with the remaining area comprising hardstanding used for car parking. The site area comprises 0.07 hectare.
- 1.2 The site is used by 'The Gate'¹ as a resource centre for hosting church groups and other events.



Photo taken from opposite side of Oxford Road of Wilson Road junction



Rear of the site

¹ Formerly known as Reading Community Church, formed in 2005 from the merger of two local Baptist Union affiliated churches, Tilehurst Free Church and Grovelands Christian Fellowship.



Rear elevation of church



Wilson Road site

- 1.3 The applicant submitted a further application at the same time for the land between 2-4 Wilson Road (171087), currently a piece of derelict land between the terraces on Wilson Road, sometimes used for parking by the Church (photo above). As this is proposed as the surrogate site for meeting the affordable housing provision of the Oxford Road site, it was originally intended and logical that the two be presented to committee together.
- 1.4 Given that the recommendation for the Oxford Road site is refusal, notwithstanding that officers consider that the Wilson Road site could be supported, with a recommendation for approval, as a Section 106 would need to include a clause linking the two site together, it was considered simpler to exclude determination of the Wilson Road site at this time and extend the period for determination for that application.
- 1.5 The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential properties. (Area edged red is 2-4 Wilson Road site 171087, and that edged blue the church site 171086).



2.0 PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 It is proposed to demolish the existing buildings on the church site and to replace it with a modern building with:

- A nursery for up to 26 no. 2-4 year olds run by a social enterprise arm of the church called 'Love Your Community'
- Community facilities on the ground floor comprising 3 no. meeting halls (one for use by the nursery during nursery hours), kitchen within the main foyer, 2 no, staff rooms and a manager's office
- Rear outside amenity space for the nursery.
- 2 no. 1 bedroom flats and 10 no. 2 bedroom flats over floors 1-3

First Floor

- Unit 1 - 2 bed - 72sqm
- Unit 2 - 1 bed - 58sqm
- Unit 3 - 2 bed - 76sqm
- Unit 4 - 2 bed - 80sqm
- Unit 5 - 2 bed - 76sqm

Second Floor

- Unit 6 - 2 bed - 72sqm
- Unit 7 - 1 bed - 58sqm
- Unit 8 - 2 bed - 76sqm
- Unit 9 - 2 bed - 80sqm
- Unit 10 - 2 bed - 76sqm

Third Floor

- Unit 11 - 2 bed - 100sqm
- Unit 12 - 2 bed - 100sqm

- 11 car parking spaces comprising 6 no. for community/nursery use, 3no. for use by 2 bedroom flats, and 2 no. disabled spaces, one for community/nursery use and one for 2 bedroom flat use.
- Cycle storage and bin storage.

2.2 The Wilson Road site (171087) is intended to provide the affordable housing provision, 1 no. 2 bed house and 2 no. 1 bed flats, and some of the parking provision (6 no. spaces) for the main site (171086) for the two bed flats.

- 2.3 The Planning Statement refers to the fact that the applicant now holds its church services at 384 The Meadway, located approximately 2km west of the application site. The applicant's aim is that a central core facility be provided on the Meadway site, with a sizeable community building planned for. The intention is that the application site would help fund such future proposals at the Meadway site, and the proposed scheme, along with providing housing, would also retain a community asset on Oxford Road.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 2.4 The proposed scheme would generate in the region of £125,000 (CIL), based on £147.29 (2018 indexed figure) per sqm of GIA, minus the area proposed to be demolished.

- 2.5 The following plans and supporting documents have been assessed:

Received 4th July 2017, unless otherwise indicated:

- Location Plan - Drawing no: 100
- Site Block Plan - Drawing no: 101
- Existing Site Plan and Floor Plans Survey - Drawing no: 120
- Existing Elevations Survey - Drawing no: 130
- Proposed Elevations North and West - Drawing no: 160
- Proposed Elevations South and East - Drawing no: 161
- Ground Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 150
- First Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 151
- Second Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 152
- Third Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 153
- Roof Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 154
- Proposed 3D View at Junction of Wilson and Oxford Road - Drawing no: 140
- Proposed Surface Water Drainage Plan - Drawing no: 170

Amended received 30th August 2017:

- Ground Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 150A

Amended Received 13th November 2017:

- Site Block Plan - Drawing no: 101A
- Proposed Elevations North and West - Document no: 160B
- Proposed Elevations South and East - Document no: 161A
- Ground Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 150B
- First Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 151A
- Second Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 152A
- Third Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 153A
- Roof Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 154A
- Proposed 3D View at Junction of Wilson and Oxford Road - Drawing no: 140B

Received 12th December 2017:

- Photo Montage options 1, 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, and 3

Amended Received 17th January 2018:

- Ground Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 150C

Other Documents received 4th July unless otherwise indicated:

- Affordable Housing Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects
- Air Quality Assessment, Document ref: P2894.2.0., prepared by agb Environmental, dated 16th June 2017

- Bat Survey report, document ref: P2894.1.0, prepared by agb Environmental, dated 30th June 2017
- BREAAAM New Construction 2014 Pre-Assessment report, prepared by MES Building Solutions, dated 15th June 2017, received 11th July 2017
- CIL form
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects, dated June 2017
- Energy and Sustainability Statement, prepared by MES Building Solution, dated 22nd June 2017, received 11th July 2017
- Environmental Noise Assessment V1, document ref: M3956, prepared by Ian Sharland Ltd, dated 19th June
- Heritage Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects
- Phase 1 Geoenvironmental Desk Study Report, document reference: 17.06-004, prepared by Listers Geo, dated June 2017
- Planning Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects
- Proposed Surface Water Drainage Plan, document ref: RCC17/170, received 11th July 2017
- Transport Statement, document ref 8170569/MB/DW/002 Issue 1, prepared by Glanville, dated 20th June 2017

Amended received 17th January 2018:

- Transport Statement Addendum, Issue 1, prepared by Glanville, dated 16th January 2018

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1

06/00885/FUL (060558) - Rear extensions and alterations for church use - Approved 18/9/2006 - this allowed for alterations and extensions to the existing building in order to provide additional space to accommodate the existing congregation and its associated ministry, and to enable the church to increase the scope and range of its community facilities such as the youth programme, crèche and toddler facilities. The scheme involved subdividing the building internally to provide two additional floors and to also extend the building to the rear.

08/01571/PREAPP (081722) - Pre-application advice was sought in 2008 to demolish the existing structures and replace them with a new three-storey community facility together with three residential units to be occupied by people working in the community facility - Obs sent -23/12/08

An application was made to English Heritage at that time to list the existing church, but due to the significant alteration of the interior they concluded that it was not of "special interest at national level", and did not meet the high threshold of national significance required for listing. However, they did comment that "the quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context...".

11/01189/FUL (111475) - Demolition of the existing church buildings, construction of a new 3 storey church building to accommodate worship/meeting rooms, offices, café and 2 retail outlets. Attached residential accommodation comprising 1x 1 bed and 1x 2 bed and 1x studio flat - Refused 19/10/11

This was considered by Planning Applications Committee in October 2011 and was refused planning permission for the following reasons:

- 1) *By virtue of the proposed footprint, height, massing and lack of set back from neighbouring properties the proposed development would appear cramped and overly dominant within the streetscene. The high eaves and vertical emphasis further result in the development sitting uncomfortably with the neighbouring properties and it is therefore considered a contrived and discordant feature within the street scene.*
- 2) *The proposed development will have an unacceptable overbearing impact on the neighbouring terrace at 543-551 Oxford Road and by virtue of the raised terrace will cause overlooking and a loss of privacy.*
- 3) *The layout fails to provide sufficient car parking spaces and does not therefore comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking/reversing movements on Wilson Road, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic.*
- 4) *By virtue of the foregoing reasons for refusal, which find the design and appearance of the replacement buildings unacceptable the proposed development has failed to justify the loss of the locally important historic building.*
- 5) *The proposed development does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of secure cycle storage provision.*
- 6) *As a result of the proposed gates being set back just 3.5 metres from the boundary vehicles will have to wait in the carriageway which is unacceptable.*
- 7) *In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure contributions towards transport (Reading Urban Area Package), local recreation/leisure and education infrastructure improvements and affordable housing the proposal fails to deal with its direct impact.*

12/01577/FUL (121716) - Demolition of the existing church buildings, construction of a new 3 storey church building to accommodate worship/meeting rooms, offices, café and 2 retail outlets. Attached residential accommodation comprising 1x 1 bed and 1x 2 bed and 1x studio flat (Resubmission of 11/01189/FUL) - Approved 8/4/13

This permission was subject to a S106 legal agreement, which included parking provision on the Wilson Road site.

160926/PREAPP - Mixed use community/commercial and residential development - Obs sent 19/5/16.

This pre-app was based on a proposal for shops, café, 3 meeting rooms, 1 bed flat at ground floor, 4 no. 2bed flats at first floor and 4 no. 2 bed flats and 1 no. 1 bed flat at second floor. This was to be the same footprint and identical elevations to the approved scheme (12/01577/FUL). This proposal included for Wilson Road to be for housing.

Advice provided was that the principle of the number of units would only be acceptable if there was clear justification and evidence for the significant reduction in the community benefits of the scheme; proposed parking provision would be well below council standards, and it was strongly advised that any scheme made use of the plot on Wilson Road for parking. It was advised that an approach to retaining and reusing some of the distinctive features of the church would be welcomed, as had been required under condition on the approved scheme (12/01577/FUL); an assessment of air and noise would be required as well as a bat survey.

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

(i) Statutory

4.1 None

(ii) Non-statutory

Ecology

4.2 The bat survey has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the risk of bats being affected by the proposals is minimal. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

RBC - Environmental Protection and Nuisance

4.3 Noise impact on development - The noise assessment submitted shows that the recommended standard for internal noise can be met, if the recommendations from the assessment are incorporated into the design. Where opening of windows leads to an increase of the internal environment to unacceptable levels we recommend that mechanical ventilation with cool air bypass is installed (option iii of section 5.7 in acoustic assessment). It is recommended that a condition be attached to consent (implementation of approved noise mitigation scheme) to ensure that the glazing (and ventilation) recommendations of the noise assessment will be followed, or that alternative but equally or more effective glazing and ventilation will be used. See recommended condition below.

4.4 Noise between community centre and residential properties - sound insulation of any building - To protect future residents from excessive noise coming from the community centre the acoustic assessment (section 7.3) recommends that the floors between them are constructed to have 5dB better acoustic attenuation than the minimum allowed in building regulations. A condition is recommended

4.5 Noise generating development - Applications which include noise generating plant, when there are nearby noise sensitive receptors, should be accompanied by an acoustic assessment carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 methodology. A condition is recommended.

4.6 Air Quality - The air quality assessment submitted with the application shows that pollution levels near to the development will be below national objective levels, therefore no mitigation has been recommended.

4.7 Contaminated Land - high risk sites - A phase I assessment submitted with the application recommends that a phase II intrusive site investigation is carried out due to the potential for contaminated land to be present at the site. A condition is recommended in order to ensure that these works are carried out.

4.8 Construction and demolition phases - We have concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses). Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability. Conditions are recommended.

RBC - Natural Environment

4.9 There are no trees on site. The site's landscaping is currently confined to some poor quality 'hedging' along the Wilson Road boundary and scrub around the parking area at the rear. The site is situated in a 10% or less canopy cover area and on a 'treed corridor' as identified in our Tree Strategy. As such, any development should

be seeking to improve vegetation coverage on site, preferably with the inclusion of trees. The current proposal is contrary to this and removes existing vegetation with no space allocated for planting of any kind.

- 4.10 Consideration should be given as to how planting could be incorporated, particular on the Oxford Road frontage which is a primary route in/out of town, even if this is in planters. Without any landscaping proposed, the development cannot be supported in tree/landscape terms.

Planning Officer Note: Amended plans were submitted, which included planters to the Oxford Road and Wilson Road frontages, along with some planting within an extended nursery garden area. Further comments from the officer were as follows:

- 4.11 Tree planting would have been the preference but I understand the constraints. I note the planters now included which is a positive step and helps soften this site. Planting should include large evergreen shrubs. Conditions would be required to secure details of planting, and replacements should failures occur.

RBC - Transport

- 4.12 The original comments from the Transport Officer were as follows: A Transport Statement has been submitted to accompany this planning application and given the level of development this has been deemed appropriate, I comment on this as follows:

Access

- 4.13 The Oxford Road site will use the access arrangements that were accepted as part of the consented scheme which is in the form of a new 4.5m wide footway crossover sufficient for two-way movement and is deemed appropriate for this development. The existing footway crossover will be removed, and the footway brought up to full height.
- 4.14 The access provides a 2.4 x 25m visibility splay commensurate with a 20mph speed limit as set out in Manual for Streets. The drawings in Appendix C of the Transport Statement illustrate the visibility splay going through a wall, this has been checked and the elevations demonstrate this wall as 600mm high. This is an acceptable height and complies with policy but the height of the wall would be conditioned so that adequate visibility is retained.

Trip Rate and Traffic Generation

- 4.15 The applicant has used TRICS which is the national standard system of trip generation and analysis in the UK and Ireland, and is used as an integral and essential part of the Transport Assessment process. It is a database system, which allows its users to establish potential levels of trip generation for a wide range of development and location scenarios, and is widely used as part of the planning application process by both developer consultants and local authorities and is accepted by Inspectors as a valid way to ascertain likely trip generation.
- 4.16 The Oxford Road site is currently occupied by a church and therefore the net traffic generation of the proposals would be the traffic generated by the new development minus the traffic generated by the existing church. However to provide a robust assessment the following will simply consider the traffic predicted to be generated by the proposed development.
- 4.17 It has been noted that the community use has been based on a floor area of 107m² however following a review of the plan this has identified that the floor area for this

use would be 168m², inclusive of the café area. This is the maximum floor area that could be utilized during the peak periods given the provision of the nursery. It has also been noted that not all of the sites selected from TRICS are comparable in that they are provided with an increased parking provision. I have as a result undertaken my own assessment and this would reduce the level of trips compared to that presented by the applicant. As a result I am happy that the trip rates provided are a robust assessment.

- 4.18 The sites selected for the nursery use are not all representative of the application site but following my own assessment the results are similar and therefore I am happy to accept those submitted by the applicant.
- 4.19 The trip rates for the privately owned flats are acceptable and represent an accurate reflection of what level of traffic generation would be generated for that use.
- 4.20 The number of vehicle trips that would be generated in the peak hours would be approximately 15 in total. This is not a material increase and within the daily fluctuations on the network and given bullet point 3 of paragraph 32 of the NPPF which states proposals should only be refused on transport grounds if the residual cumulative impacts are severe, a refusal on traffic generation grounds would be hard to defend at an appeal.

Parking

- 4.21 The car and cycle parking standards relevant to the development are provided in Reading Borough Local Development Framework Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document Final Adopted 31st October 2011.
- 4.22 The car parking standards adopt a zonal approach to parking provision. The development, which is the subject of this application, is located in Zone 2 Primary Core Area. The relevant car parking standards are reproduced below.

Table 1: RBC Car Parking Standards

Land Use	Standard
Housing	1 Per Unit (Required)
Community Use	1 Per 20 m ² (Maximum)
D1 Day Nurseries with Flexible Pick Up and Drop Off Time	1 Per 3 FTE Staff Plus (Maximum)

- 4.23 It has been stated that the above standards suggest that the development should provide the following car parking:
- Residential: 16 car parking spaces
 - Community Hall: 5 car parking spaces, and
 - Nursery: 1 car parking space for staff and 2 for parents.
- 4.24 It should be noted that the proposals involve removal of the church use from the application site and relocation to a new site which would be the subject of a further planning application. However it has been noted within the Design and Access Statement at Paragraph 2.01 Community Use that it states the following:
- 4.25 The new development is comprised of community use at ground floor level measuring 372m² in gross internal floor area. This represents a nominal increase in

community space compared with the current building. And continues to state: *“The church has a history of engagement and partnership with a range of local initiatives and groups and intends to maintain such partnerships wherever possible. The design of the community space has a flexible layout, with sliding folding partitions, enabling the size of spaces to be controlled to suit end user needs. In addition to the three hall spaces, an entrance foyer/cafe area provides a welcoming main entrance/hub and is served by a kitchen.”*

- 4.26 Given that the hall has sliding doors to allow a flexible use of space which would increase the available floor level, albeit outside of the nursery hours of operation, it is possible that larger events could occur and therefore the parking assessment should take account of the full hall area calculated as 151m². This would equate to a provision of 8 spaces. It is noted that the site currently has 20 spaces allocated to it in the Wilson Road site.
- 4.27 The applicant has assessed how the parking for the community use could be provided and has stated that during the day, the users of the community hall would be permitted to use the resident’s parking spaces within the site, which would entirely meet the demand. However, there is no guarantee as to how much parking would be available and makes no allowance for weekend use when more residents would be home.
- 4.28 It has also been confirmed that in the evenings, the users of the community hall would be able to use the two spaces allocated to the nursery. This would leave a residual demand for six car parking spaces as identified above. It has been stated that this residual demand would be accommodated by the on-street parking bays on Oxford Road which are generally used to provide short term parking for the shops during the day but revert to uncontrolled parking after 6.30pm once the retail related parking demand has ceased. Visitors to the community hall arriving before 6.30pm would be able to use the residents parking bays on the surrounding roads, which allow parking for up to 2 hours until 8pm for non-residents to facilitate social and community use whilst not affecting resident ability to park overnight.
- 4.29 The existing use is provided with a provision of parking that complies with the Council’s parking standards but this development will remove the off street parking and further encourage the use of parking on street, which can be heavily used and has not been assessed to establish what level of parking would be available. Given that the church / community facility is currently provided with a parking provision that would meet its need the proposed development should include the provision of 8 dedicated on site spaces for the proposed community use.
- 4.30 One car parking space will be allocated for staff of the nursery in compliance with the Council’s standard and one space will be allocated for parents. The Council’s standard suggests that the nursery would generate the demand for two parent’s parking spaces to facilitate the drop off and pick up of children. The remaining demand for one parents’ drop off and pick up parking space would be met by the existing short term parking bays (max 30 minute stay) adjacent to the site on Oxford Road. This level of additional short term parking demand would not have a noticeable effect on parking supply and therefore has been deemed acceptable given that Wilson Road is one way restricting the direction of the onward journeys that would occur.
- 4.31 One car parking space will be allocated to each of the residential units in compliance with the Council’s standard. It is noted that three of the residential units within the Oxford Road site will have allocated parking spaces within the adjacent Wilson Road site and this is deemed acceptable. However, given the site

location and the surrounding parking restrictions I would be happy to accept a reduced residential provision to provide the requirement for community use parking. Also as stated in the Council's parking standards a development of more than 10 flats would be required to provide a visitor parking space however this has not been assessed.

- 4.32 The development site is located in an area designated as a Residents' Parking Permit Area. Under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area. Therefore there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the flats will not be issued with resident parking permits.
- 4.33 The proposed car parking allocation for the site should therefore be reviewed.
- 4.34 The applicant has stated that the Council's cycle parking standards suggest that the development should provide the following cycle parking spaces:
- Residential: 10 cycle parking spaces
 - Community Hall: 2 cycle parking spaces, and
 - Nursery: 2 cycle parking spaces.
- 4.35 I can confirm that this does comply with policy in terms of the residential and nursery but as identified above the community hall is larger than assessed and therefore 3 cycle spaces are required. As a result the cycle parking provision must be increased.
- 4.36 The development provides 10 secure covered cycle parking spaces dedicated for the residential use within the Oxford Road site and four short term cycle parking spaces for the nursery and the community hall within the Wilson Road site. However, cycle parking for the community hall and nursery should be located on the Oxford Road site so that it is clear who this cycle parking is allocated to especially as the cycle parking on the Wilson Road site is located within the rear car park. This cycle parking should also be kept separate from the residential cycle parking for security reasons.
- 4.37 Revised plans should therefore be submitted with regards the car and cycle parking.
- 4.38 Refuse can be collected from Wilson Road with refuse collection areas located within 15m of the carriageway.
- 4.39 Please ask the applicant's agent to submit suitably amended plans to address the above issues prior to determining the application.
- 4.40 *Planning Officer note:* Following the submission of amended plans Transport provide further comments as follows:
- 4.41 The parking assessment should take account of the full hall area calculated as 145m². This would equate to a provision of 7 spaces.
- 4.42 Following discussions with the applicant it has been agreed that the parking allocation be revised to the following:
- 7 dedicated spaces for the community hall/nursery;
 - 1 space per unit for 11, two bed units i.e. 11 residential spaces; and
 - The remaining one-bed units would be car free.

This ensures that the parking for the community hall / nursery and the residential complies with Policy.

4.43 The Transport Addendum has stated that the development will provide the following cycle parking spaces:

- Oxford Road Site:
 - o Community use - 4 secure covered cycle parking spaces,
 - o Community use - 2 secure visitors cycle parking spaces,
 - o Residential use - 14 secure covered cycle parking space, and
- Wilson Road Site:
 - o Residential use - 6 secure covered cycle parking spaces.

The above provision is in excess of the Council's standards and therefore complies with Policy.

4.44 I have reviewed the layout plan and all of the cycle spaces are adequately located to serve the adjacent buildings. However the cycle store for the units on the first floor is too small to accommodate 5 bicycles and therefore the one along the southern boundary of the store should be removed. Given that cycle parking for the residential use is in excess of the required standard no replacement is required. I am however happy for this to be dealt with by way of a condition.

4.45 In the circumstances there are no objections subject to conditions and informatives: Construction Method Statement; Vehicle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans; Vehicle access provided in accordance with approved plans; Bicycle parking - plans to be approved; Bin storage; No entitlement to parking permits; Visibility splays before occupation.

(iii) Public/ local consultation and comments received

4.46 For 171086 notification letters were sent to 2-20 Wilson Road (even), 1c Wilson Road 543-555 Oxford Road (odd), 496-510 Oxford Road (even), 2-12 Wantage Road, 200 Norcot 500-5, 2-10 (evens) Wilson Road, 2-12 (evens) Wantage Road, 496 - 510 (evens) and 543 - 551 Oxford Road; a notice in the press and a site notice displayed. 39 responses were received, including 8 no. in support.

Comments for both applications are summarised as follows (full responses are available to view on line, via RBC website):

Parking issues

- It is suggested that car parking needs for the community hall and nursery will be met by the fact that residents will leave their car parking spaces empty during the day. The suggested plans for preventing car parking issues lack credibility.
- The provision for parking is woefully inadequate and naïve. The traffic survey does not even mention the impact of the school upon traffic. Parents of children at the nursery will want to park on Wilson Road at the same time as parents of children at the school. There are not enough spaces on residential roads for any overspill from the community centre of nursery
- Additional cars in an already overcrowded area.
- Not enough room for long-stay or short-stay parking.
- No enforcement on parking, so people already use the pavements as parking spaces. Building more houses will make this worse.
- The proposals for users of the community spaces to use bays on street on surrounding roads does not take account that these are already oversubscribed.

- Previous permission intended Wilson Road site to be for parking.
- Most nursery drop offs would be during peak hours; few would park on Oxford Road/ cross Oxford Road with babies.
- Wilson Road is a one way street, with a school on it, traffic and parking are a constant issues, this will only make it worse.
- A lot of people in a small space - unless flats will only be sold to those who commit to not owning a car.
- The applications ignore the former Elgee Plastics permission, which has no restriction of access to parking permits and will contribute to the parking pressure
- If permission were granted parking permits for residents should be prohibited.
- There would be less pressure on parking than in the previous application.
- Users of the community facilities will be local people who walk there or use the bus.
- The parking at the rear of Wilson Road includes a space at the back of no. 4 Wilson Road, which will detract from the use of that garden.

Design/ Loss of Building

- To demolish such a historically significant structure would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area. English Heritage stated in their letter (3rd Dec 2009) that the *“Former Grovelands Chapel is a handsome and well-composed building...the quality of the chapel’s exterior and the local standing of it’s architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context.”* The redevelopment of the site should be respectful to this historical significance and the character of it brings to our local area.
- The building would have been listed had it not been for the loss of the internal features.
- The current building fits into its context of late Victorian and Edwardian neighbours and enhances the streetscape without unduly domination the surrounding houses. The proposal is out of scale and keeping with the character of the surrounding area.
- The proposed scheme is visually dominant and overbearing, particularly when considered from the context of the relationship with existing homes from the rear. It is too tall and taller than anything around.
- Such a shame to knock down a period building and replace with a modern glass box. It would be an eye-sore. It will change the whole appearance and character of the area.
- This current application lacks any features which could be regarded as an attempt to have a building of significance.
- The new building shows little care aesthetically for its local surroundings. Please don’t give up on this beautiful timeless beauty and replace it with a cramped monstrosity that will date in no time. Another building to be replaced with generic rubbish.
- The building overhangs/ dwarfs the neighbouring buildings
- This corner site is very visible, but whereas the existing building is landmark which sits comfortably in the streetscene, the proposed flats would be “in your face” for all the wrong reasons.
- The design compares unfavourably with the existing building’s architectural merits and is of traditional local materials. Incorporating a few red bricks does not make it “fit in”
- The previous proposal cannot be seen as a precedent for a box of flats.
- NPPF states that *“good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making*

places better for people." This aspiration does not seem to be fulfilled by the scheme.

- The proposed development would not outweigh the harm done resulting from the loss of the original church building.
- Would it not be valued to keep the exterior of the building, similar to Jacksons and convert the interior. The building can still be saved. Why not keep the façade and put flats inside?
- To demolish the building would be another act of vandalism that this council seem to revel in. Reading has a bad reputation for demolition and bad planning decisions. Make Reading aesthetic again.
- The current building could not have a better heritage with links to Brock Barracks, the Sutton family and Charles H Spurgeon the most prestigious Baptist preacher of the late 18th century.
- Urge the Council to put this under local listing.
- Wonderful idea to replace a tired old building.
- The provision of community space and housing is welcome, but it should be built in a style sympathetic to the majority of buildings. It would be good if we could retain some of the identity of the history of the site.

Overdevelopment/ Density

- The dwelling density is twice that defined in the Borough housing strategy, flats look cramped

Affordable housing

- The proposal does not address the significant shortage of affordable family dwellings in the area.
- Two family homes would be preferable.
- Applicant has failed to demonstrate why the housing mix should include a small two bed house with three flats which deviates from the properties on Wilson Road and RBC policies.
- If both sites are considered together, 16 units would require 5 affordable housing units to meet 30%.
- The site is overgrown and would be much better used for affordable housing.

Impact on residential amenity

- The raised outside space at the site boundary has a significant overbearing and dominant effect, as does the extension of the floor plan of the building bringing it significantly closer to existing properties and a full 2 storeys higher than the existing structure to the rear.
- There would be detriment to privacy and overlooking of existing residents from the terrace of unit 12, balcony of unit 10 and to a lesser degree unit 7, which are oriented such that they overlook the private gardens of properties on Wantage and Wilson Roads, with no.2 Wantage Road the worst affected
- There is not enough outside space.
- Noise will be an issue.
- Height will reduce the amount of morning light that will reach 4-10 Wilson Road and increase the likelihood of overlooking

Community Use

- As far as I am aware there is not a need for a community hub. The proposed nursery is way too small.
- In over 18 years of living close to the church there has been very little in the way of community usage. During the last application there was deliberate

inflation in the statements regarding what the church provided to the local community.

- It provides additional community space and will bring re-generation of this site. The facilities proposed are in keeping with the needs of the local area.
- The Oxford Road is in need of a community space, the proposal for a pre-school is also welcome in view of the Childcare sufficiency report produce by RBC which shows the lack of places for funded 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year olds.
- The church building is rarely used as it is in a poor conditions, so transforming into a multi-use community space is a great idea. I look forward to seeing it used in various ways for the community.
- The current application abandons the idea of a new church on this site and significantly reduces the amount of community space. The DAS states the church "has a history of engagement with local groups and intends to maintain such partnerships where possible" - A vey weak commitment. Is this likely to be sustainable if they are concentrating all their efforts elsewhere?
- To be a resource to the community that meets the needs of a growing and diverse population, the building is no longer fit for purpose. As the building has been declared not significant by English Heritage surely therefore the use of the building as a place to serve the community must be a priority for consideration. The increased cost of the work needing to be done to convert the existing building to make it fit for purpose makes the project non-viable for the church. The proposals allow for a multi-use facility that meets the needs of all abilities and rooms that can be used for a variety of purposes. The building is underused due to its limitations.
- The community work carried out by this church, particularly for children and young people is immensely beneficial. The work would be enhanced by larger and more suitable premises.

Infrastructure

- Existing schools and doctors surgeries are already overcrowded.
- The development on Wilson Road for affordable housing for the church site would only exacerbate the existing problems of infrastructure provision.

Other

- If the church needs money why not use the space for promote community events that will bring in money as well as bring the community together rather than attracting more people, cars and potential problems.
- The area does not need more flats, but larger family homes with outside play spaces.
- Would challenge the view that "*it is clear that the principle of development on Oxford Road site has already been established.*" Just because one application has been accepted does not mean further ones should be.
- Salami tactics are being employed. Nothing has materially changed in the area to suggest that a higher density development is required or desirable and infact the situation has worsened [since the previous permission] with increased foot and road traffic due to the doubling of Wilson Primary School.
- The fabric of the church is in good repair where it has been maintained. There have been repeated periods of neglect and bare minimum maintenance when previous applications failed.
- There is no evidence to suggest that the development is being treated as anything other than a cash cow to fund the real aim of the developers which is to build a new church at the Meadway. This accounts for the increasing amount of residential in each subsequent application. Surely if the church are looking to develop this site to benefit the local community considerations should be made regarding the local parishioners and resident requirements. Their primary

concern is to provide sufficient funds to improve their church provision in a different community area, not locally to this church.

- I question the motives and community-mindedness of an organisation that professes to value their connection with an area, only to let an important building in their care go to ruin.
- Building flats will add to the much needed additional housing in Reading.
- The site notice has not had a date on it since it was put up, and ask you extend the period for consultation - *officer note: additional sites notices were put up following this comment.*

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) Practice Guide: 'Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide'

Reading Borough Local Development Framework - Core Strategy (2008, altered 2015)

CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design)
CS3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity)
CS4 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development)
CS7 (Design and the public realm)
CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources & Amenities)
CS14 (Provision of Housing)
CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)
CS20 (Implementation of Reading's Transport Strategy)
CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)
CS31 (Additional and Existing Community Facilities)
CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)
CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)
CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology)

Reading Borough Local Development Framework - Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2008, altered 2015)

Policy SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
Policy DM1 (Adaption to Climate Change)
Policy DM3 (Infrastructure)
Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)
Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing)
Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)
Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
Policy DM19 (Air Quality)

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)
Affordable Housing (2013)
Planning Obligations under S106 (2015)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)

Other Documents

Berkshire (including South Bucks Strategic Housing Market Assessment) Berkshire Authorities and Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, Final Report, February 2016, prepared by G. L. Hearn

Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards (2015), DCLG

6.0 APPRAISAL

Main considerations:

The main issues to be considered are:

- i) Principle of Uses
- ii) Design and Appearance
- iii) Loss of the Heritage Asset
- iv) Density and Mix of Housing
- v) Residential Amenity
- vi) Transport Issues
- vii) Environmental Matters
- viii) Sustainability
- ix) Section 106

(i) Principle of Uses

6.1 The principle of the proposed uses for the site, community and residential are considered acceptable.

6.2 The ground floor of the church is currently in use as a community facility used for small church meetings, church socials and the occasional leader's conference, and the proposed would be for a new community facility of 372m² in gross internal floor area. This is a slight increase in community space compared to the existing, and the Design and Access Statement states that "*The design of the community space has a flexible layout, with sliding folding partitions, enabling the size of spaces to be controlled to suit end user needs. In addition to the three hall spaces, an entrance foyer/cafe area provides a welcoming main entrance/hub and is served by a kitchen.*" The community use is therefore considered to meet policy requirements under policy CS31.

6.3 In terms of the proposed flats, the provision of housing would accord with policy CS14. It is a sustainable location well served by a choice of means of travel with much pedestrian and bus traffic along Oxford Road.

6.4 However, the proposal also needs to satisfy other policy considerations related to design, in the context of the loss of a heritage asset, traffic, mix, affordable housing, and infrastructure requirements, which are discussed below.

(ii) Design and Appearance

6.5 The NPPF and policy CS7 of the LDF Core Strategy seek to ensure that new developments are of a high standard of design that maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area within which they are located. The existing structure is considered to be a distinctive landmark along the Oxford Road when seen from the west and from Wilson Road as a result of its set back from the southern boundary. The red brick construction is in keeping with other buildings in the surrounding area including Brock Barracks. This view is supported by responses from residents, ward councillors and the Reading Civic Society.

- 6.6 The existing building has a 2 storey ground floor space with eaves at 5 metres high in line with the top of the first floor windows of adjoining properties on Oxford Road. The roof is steeply pitched with a maximum height of 11.8 metres, just over 2m higher than the adjacent terrace. The appearance of the building is dominated by its roofscape.
- 6.7 The existing building is in line with the adjacent terrace of shops, save for a small projection of the gable feature and bell tower and the low railings which wrap round the site along Oxford Road and Wilson Road.
- 6.8 Although the proposed building would, in overall height terms, be slightly lower than the existing church, it would introduce mass at the second and third floor levels. This would be in stark contrast to the adjacent buildings, where at second floor there is a pitched roof with small dormers set within it. The proposed building would bring the whole form forward at second floor and introduce a new third floor, which although recessed, appears incongruous in the street scene, especially when combined with the use of vertical zinc cladding at this level.



Original submission - Oxford Road elevation

- 6.9 The DRP were consulted and their full comments are included at Appendix 1. With respect to this main façade they commented:
- "The panel do not agree that in its current form the use of a fully glazed ground floor is the best or right architectural response" and "that massing and design shown in the main building elevates the heavy elements of residential above a plinth of glazing, this creates a top heavy scheme with no clear grounding, something which is not seen contextually in the streetscape. More thought needs to be applied to how the mass and weight of materiality is brought into the scheme..."*
- 6.10 The DRP also commented that *" very little detail was provided on the topmost element, and although a dark metallic finish was assumed for this part, the justification for its use was unexplained. Furthermore the Panel is concerned by this element's relationship with the adjoining properties on the Oxford Road ..work would need to be done to ensure that this was not a failure when viewed along Oxford Road."*
- 6.11 The applicant responded with some amended elevations to show brick columns to provide *"architectural linkage between the ground and upper floors"*. Although considered an improvement by the officer, the remainder of the design largely remained as originally submitted. The Design Review Panel provided further

comment and stated that *“The Panel do not consider that the massing proposed is appropriate for the site. The existing building whilst of similar height to the proposed at its ridge, features a steep pitch that aligns well with both the streetscape and the neighbouring buildings. Further to this the elevations need considerable work. The open ‘grid’ approach is foreign to the context, glazed balconies will display all the detritus stored on them and the very top floor is too tall proportionally vs the main part of the façade.”*



Amended elevation to Oxford Road

- 6.12 With respect to the building as it wraps round the corner into Wilson Road the proposed scheme extends further than the existing main rear church façade and beyond what was approved previously. It would be partly four storeys (penthouse), but mostly 3 storeys in height. Issues were raised with a previous refused scheme that the building mass was too bulky. Similar comments were provided by officers on the application scheme and advice that it needed to be reduced and be more domestic in scale.
- 6.13 The applicant’s amendments (November 2017) included slightly reducing the depth of this section, so that the development would be 6m from the boundary with the plot to the south (former Elgee Plastics), although still larger in depth than the previous approved scheme, but with no reduction in height. The applicant was advised that this was still considered to be too dominant a form and not providing a suitable transition along Wilson Road with existing residential properties.
- 6.14 The previous approved scheme had an angled corner to Oxford Road/ Wilson Road, such that it would not be read as part of the terrace, and thus would achieve prominence. The proposed scheme includes balconies at the corner, but these follow the line of the building, and are not considered to provide any prominence, indeed the DRP commented that *“the set back balconies ...are lost in definition and provide a poor quality of space for the user”*. An image of a suggested option for an alternative balcony treatment to the corner was provided in December 2012, as shown below, where the balcony frontage projects slightly beyond the brick façade. Officers do not consider that this would represent a significant enhancement to the original submission.



- 6.15 Concerns were raised by officers regarding the original large first floor communal amenity space, which extended almost to the boundary with the former Elgee Plastics site to the north. Not only was this considered to create too much bulk/overdevelopment of the site, but a negative effect on the amenity space proposed below it, to serve the nursery. In addition there was a lack of clarity as to how this space would be managed when it was intended to be shared space between the nursery and residents, as well as concern regarding impacts on residential amenity of existing and proposed residents.
- 6.16 The amended scheme removed this communal space, and further to officer comments regarding issues of rear balconies at first, second and third floor levels, some of which were adjacent or very close to boundaries with surrounding properties, amendments were made as follows:
- Balcony to Units 5 & 10 were reduced in depth and pulled off the boundary with no. 551 Oxford Road
 - Balcony to Units 1 & 6 moved to Wilson Road elevation
 - Terrace to Unit 12 moved off the boundary to no. 551 Oxford Road.
- 6.17 The changes to units 5, 1 and 6 are considered to be an improvement. However, the balcony to unit 10 at second floor and the terrace to the penthouse unit 12 at third floor would enable far reaching views over neighbouring gardens and properties, which would be unacceptable and would conflict with Policy DM4.
- 6.18 In terms of materials, brickwork played a minor part in the original scheme and the DRP commented that this was "*lost as most elements of the façade are glazed or coloured opaque panels with a glazing system set subserviently to the brick. The set back does apply more emphasis of the brickwork, but there does need to be re-balancing of the materials to create a joined up façade*". Amended options of materials have been submitted, which introduces more brick. However, this would need to be revisited in the context of an acceptable overall design.
- 6.19 The amended scheme includes for planters to the Oxford Road and Wilson Road frontages, along with a larger area of garden at the rear, to serve the nursery. The Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that the principles of these would be acceptable subject to securing details through condition.
- (iii) **Loss of the Heritage Asset**
- 6.20 Although the building is not nationally listed, as set out above and in previous committee reports, the building constitutes an undesignated heritage asset as "*the*

quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context".

- 6.21 As was the case when the previous scheme was considered the applicant's position is that a new building would make more efficient use of the site and would be more cost effective than attempting to refurbish and extend the existing building, which they consider is not energy efficient, with a roof in a relatively poor state of repair.
- 6.22 The position at the time of considering the previous application, and still the held view of officers, is that the existing main building does have a landmark quality. The officer has made it clear through the course of the application and in pre-application advice that in order to justify the building's replacement any new building would need to be of high design quality that maintains a landmark/ feature quality while successfully integrating with the streetscene. This was a key consideration during the course of the previous application, and remains so.
- 6.23 The existing building, although significantly different to the neighbouring buildings, is not considered harmful to the character of the street; it is prominent and achieves landmark status, but is considered to fit into its context and enhances the streetscape without dominating the neighbouring properties. The applicant's own Heritage Statement states that the building is considered to be *"handsome and well composed and of good quality design"*. This is not considered to be the case for the proposed scheme. The proposed façade and mass have a poor relationship to the existing buildings and it is considered to be overly dominant and overbearing, and out of scale and character with the surrounding area.
- 6.24 In addition during the course of the application the Design Review Panel were consulted. They provided a range of advice as to how the proposed scheme could be improved, but their fundamental comment was that *"changes required for the scheme to ascertain landmark status are terminal to the current scheme and therefore a full re-design is required."*
- 6.25 With regard to undesignated heritage assets there is a presumption in policy terms in favour of their conservation and their loss requires appropriate and proportionate justification. With respect to the previous approved scheme (12/01577/FUL) the design, materials and the overall community use focus were considered sufficient to outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of the existing building. However, this proposal, albeit retaining some community use on the ground floor in a purpose built facility, represents a significantly smaller amount of overall community use, as compared to the previous scheme, with the predominant use as residential. This combined with the design, are not considered sufficient to justify the loss of the existing building as part of this proposal.
- 6.26 It is understood that the applicant's requirements have changed since the 2012 permission and that their focus is on their other site at the Meadway to provide an enhanced church and community facility, which they state will provide significant benefits to the community. However, the position remains that this is some distance from the Oxford Road site and the consideration of this application needs to be with regard to its local context and local community. The need to provide funds for the other site is not an overriding factor in consideration of the Oxford Road site.
- (iv) **Density and Mix of Housing**
- 6.27 Policy CS15 states that density and mix of residential development within the Borough includes being informed by an assessment of the characteristics of the area in which it is located and its current and future level of accessibility. It goes on to

state that developments should provide an appropriate range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment. The mix of dwellings should include an appropriate proportion of units designed to the Lifetime Homes standard.

- 6.28 The most recent SHMA states that the focus for new market housing provision will be on two and three bedroom properties. The application site is in a highly accessible location and there is a mix of units in the locality. The proposal has a density of 146 dwellings per ha, which is akin to town centre density. As a corner site, which can have some prominence, and in a district centre, and to make effective use of the site a higher density is considered acceptable. In this instance the proposal is predominantly for two bedroom flats (10 of the 12 proposed), providing the potential of family accommodation and to Lifetime Home standards. The proposed density is considered acceptable, but there are other areas of policy with which the scheme does not accord, including massing/height and to comply with these would be likely to require the reduction of the overall numbers of units.

(v) Residential Amenity

- 6.29 The original submission included for large communal spaces (including shared with the nursery), terraces and balconies at upper floors. As described above these would have a detrimental effect on the privacy of neighbouring properties from overlooking. A number of changes were sought and some of the amendments described in para 6.16 have improved the relationship of these to neighbouring properties. There are however, still concerns with the penthouse terrace at third floor and balcony at second floor, which would be contrary to Policy DM4.
- 6.30 With regard to rear facing windows for Units 5 and 10 these are at 18m to the boundary with the rear garden of the approved houses (under ref: 160180), which although would afford some views over the garden are considered to be of sufficient distance to not have significant detrimental effect on overlooking and loss of privacy.
- 6.31 The projection along Wilson Road, which includes Units 1 & 6, have south facing windows at minimum of 6m from the side elevation of the approved houses on Wilson Road. Although the approved scheme on the adjacent site has no windows, due to the proximity of the proposed windows and the height it is considered that there would be some loss of privacy from overlooking into neighbouring gardens. As referred to above this is part of the proposed scheme where the massing is considered inappropriate and would be overbearing.
- 6.32 Proposed room sizes and overall flat dimensions would exceed National Space Standards (DCLG).
- 6.33 The amenity spaces provided by balconies and terraces would meet the requirements of Policy DM10

(vi) Transport Issues

- 6.34 In contrast to the previous approved scheme (12/01577), which was largely community use the current proposal includes for largely residential use. During the course of the application the Transport team liaised with the applicant to secure an amended layout and number of spaces to serve the proposed scheme and the Wilson Road site.

- 6.35 Transport has confirmed that with regard to transport the scheme is acceptable subject to a number of conditions including prohibition of entitlement to parking permits for surrounding streets. The amended scheme, for the Oxford Road and Wilson Road sites combined, provides for:
- 7 dedicated spaces for the community hall/nursery;
 - 1 space per unit for 11, two bed units i.e. 11 residential spaces; and
 - The remaining one-bed units would be car free.

6.36 Some of the residential spaces for Oxford Road would be provided as part of the Wilson Road site.

6.37 The proposal would satisfy the requirements of Policy CS24, and DM12.

(vii) Environmental Matters

6.38 With regard to air quality the submitted Air Quality Assessment identifies that the impacts due to emissions from local road traffic on the air quality for proposed residents are shown to be acceptable at the worst-case locations assessed, with concentrations being below the air quality objectives at all of the receptors. No mitigation is therefore proposed. This has been confirmed as acceptably by the Environmental Protection and Nuisance Officer.

6.39 In terms of noise, a detailed assessment was submitted, and the officer has confirmed that subject to suitable conditions the proposal would be acceptable in this regard.

6.40 The proposed scheme is therefore considered to accord with policies CS34 and DM19.

(viii) Sustainability

6.41 Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design) and the Council's SPD 'Sustainable Design and Construction' sets out the policy position with regards to sustainability. It applies to proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, depending on the extent of the alterations to a building.

6.42 The applicant has submitted a BREEAM pre-assessment report demonstrating that community provision could meet BREEAM score of 60.4% (Very Good), which accords with Policy CS1.

6.43 A number of sustainable construction strategies are proposed to be incorporated into the design and construction including minimum standards relating to energy and water use. The proposed approach would be a fabric first approach which ensures an energy efficient building that is not totally reliant on renewable energy to achieve a reduction in emission in accordance with requirements of policies CS1 and CS2. The Energy and Sustainability Statement identifies a reduction in emissions (when compared to a Building Regulations baseline) of 22%. Solar panels are also proposed, and these also show a reduction in CO2 of 22%.

(ix) Section 106

6.44 The affordable housing provision for the main site is proposed to be provided for by the development on the Wilson Road site (171087), which as described earlier in this report has been found to be broadly compliant with policy and subject to resolving issues of tenure could be supported. Having a surrogate site is an acceptable approach and would need to be linked to the main site through a Section 106 legal

agreement. The 4 units proposed would meet the requirements of Policy DM6, i.e. 30% of the units.

- 6.45 With regard to tenure the applicant is currently offering 100% of the units as shared ownership. Officers have advised the applicant that the units should include some for affordable rent. The applicant has identified that due to viability issues that this would not be possible. Discussion with the applicant on this matter is ongoing.
- 6.46 Affordable housing policy seeks that affordable housing mix should reflect what would have been provided within the main site. A 2x bed house and 3x1 bed flats is reflective of the main site. Although larger properties would be welcomed this has been balanced against the site providing a policy compliant number of units and making efficient use of the site.
- 6.47 The applicant would be expected to make contributions in line with the requirements of policy CS9, DM3 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD. The applicant has stated in the Planning Statement that *"it is requested that in determining the level of contribution required, the council considers the considerable community benefit that this development will provide..."*. However, no proposed figure in accordance with policy has been presented. This is contrary to policy and no specific viability assessment has been submitted.

(x) Equality

- 6.48 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation.
- 6.49 The proposals would allow improved access for disabled members of the community and would be lifetime homes compliant. It would also improve access for parents and children to nursery facilities. It would provide disabled parking spaces. Otherwise, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application.
- 6.50 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics, it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 During the course of the application officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant to overcome the issues raised above. However, it has not been possible to resolve all matters within the context of the existing scheme and is therefore recommended for refusal. This is on the grounds of loss of a distinctive building, with a design, which is not considered to be of high quality which responds positively to its local context. It would have a mass and height which would be overbearing and would give rise to detrimental effects on residential amenity, contrary to relevant policies.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

APPENDIX 1: DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

Reading Design Review Panel Comments

Application No. 171086

Listed Building: Yes/No
 Conservation Area: Yes/No

Proposal: Demolition of existing church buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide a four storey mixed use development comprised of community halls and ancillary accommodation at ground floor level, car parking and 2 x one bedroom flats and 10 x two bedroom flats at the upper floor levels.

Location: Grovelands Baptist Church Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HJ

Site	Building	Sustainability	Detailing	Design Approach
Layout - Urban Structure & Grain	Layout – Density & mix	Energy	Craftsmanship	Response to context
Character of area	Scale	Materials	Functional	Legibility
Quality of public realm	Massing	Water	Longevity	Innovation
Landscape - continuity & enclosure	Appearance	Access	Weathering	
Orientation	Function	Health	Structurally honest	
Vehicle circulation	Outlook	Waste	Historically correct	
Pedestrian routes	Legibility	Reuse		
	Adaptability	Inclusivity		

Site

The sites are located on the South side of the Oxford Road, on the junction with Wilson Road. The primary site is a large redundant church set in a corner position, and the secondary site is a cleared site, best described as a negative space in the terraced urban form of Wilson Road.

Both boundaries face onto a mix of residential, commercial, busy arterial road and the Oxford Road retail areas.

General scale of the surrounding buildings is low rise 2-3 storey buildings mainly formed of residential terraced housing. The exception to the rule is the larger, civic and community buildings such as those outlined in the applicants D&A.

The general street plan is well defined, terraced 'grid' like layouts, where corner buildings provide a key role to the formation and definition of the streetscape and urban rationale.

Generally the site / sites are level in topography. Both sites are overlooked by residential but this is symptomatic with the typology of the surrounding residential urban grain and this should be understood through good design rather than seen as an overbearing constraining feature of the sites.

The panel agree with the applicants view on the key nature of the primary site both architecturally and socially. This therefore automatically and logically applies further weight to requirements of good, quality design on the applicant's primary site.

Building

The building as currently proposed by the applicant is a ¼ community use and ¾ residential use on the main site with the secondary site being 100% residential. Therefore the development is a residential led scheme with an aspect of community use.

The mix of residential units is weighted towards 2bed family apartments, which is welcomed and supported by the panel.

The community use will include bookable 'open use' spaces along with a small nursery and associated outdoor space split between ground and first.

Overall the two uses in the main building can sit well together - in theory – if well designed, and spaces / uses are clearly defined.

This is however where the current scheme starts to fall apart, for the following reasons –

- The nursery at ground is currently squeezed to the rear of the site where access to the nursery is ill defined and exhaustive. Outside play space is a defined requirement of this use, and to comply, these areas are split between a partly undercroft'ed soft play space and a further, larger first floor outdoor play space accessible by an external open stair, or by entering the residential use and utilising the private residential core to gain access. This is not a good option in the panels view and it will have a clear effect on the marketability and price of the apartments in the rest of the build, not to mention security and definition of space and use.
- The current design shows a 100% glazed ground floor façade where children and potentially sensitive uses could be carried out. We do encourage the use of glazing at the ground floor to carry on the context of the surrounding uses, but some control via a revised façade design needs to be applied to this element in particular taking more of lead from the neighbouring shops where glazing is punctuated by ownership boundaries and structure.
- The panel do not agree that in its current form the use of a fully glazed ground floor is the best or right architectural response, and would request that the applicant explore a clearer, more legible architecture that ties the two uses in the building together to form a holistic approach to the design, rather than trying to apply a clear definition between the two. This revision needs to follow a logical and contextual path where the architecture of the building both responds and enhances the street scene and provides a building of true architectural merit.
- The two uses generate a parking requirement and also a servicing requirement on the site. It is abundantly clear to the panel that this requirement is a driving force that has played too much of a role in the design, layout, and form of both sites. The panel have requested that the council's Highways officer makes contact with the applicant's team to look at the policy set against this site and where things can be relaxed due to the site specifics. The panel expect that this could help reduce parking on site and help both sites reach a better architectural outcome.
- The massing and design shown in the main building elevates the heavy elements of the residential above a plinth of glazing, this creates a top heavy scheme with no clear grounding, something which is not seen contextually in the street scape. More thought needs to be applied to how the mass and weight of materiality is brought into the scheme, how they can help ground the building and how these elements can provide an answer to controlling ground floor uses and views, whilst keeping flexibility internally.
- Overlooking of the proposed site (as described before) is systematic of the area, however the panel does not feel that the internal overlooking within the site its self is fully acceptable given the sensitive uses applied to the external spaces. Again, this needs to be fully understood and views must be especially considered where children at play can be overlooked from new residential properties.
- The secondary site which is seen to provide 100% social housing is somewhat of an oddity and seems to be wholly driven by parking and overspill parking from the larger neighbouring site. The panel welcomes the approach of the applicant in providing proper homes for the social housing aspect of the proposal and this typology should be followed through to the other parts of the site to enable the site to sit better contextually. The panel is sure the council would much rather have 3 (potentially 3 bed) houses rather than the current mix of a 2 bed house, 2bed apartments and 1 bed apartment, this approach should be discussed with the council's housing officer. Again further talks with the council's transport officer should help with the viability of the above.
- A potential fix for the site could be sought by following the design approach found at 65-79 Elm Park Road Reading RG30 2TP - where the continuation of the terrace is carried through whilst allowing access to parking at the rear via a 3m width one way access road in a classic 'yard terrace' approach which is also found at 49-51 George Street, Reading.

Sustainability

It was noted in the applicant's presentation that the design approach would be a fabric first approach and would look to comply with lifetime homes, the requirements of building regulations and Reading's own requirements on sustainability.

The panel both welcomes and supports this approach.

Detailing

The detailing provided in the application pack shows some thought has been applied to finding contextual relevance in terms of materiality, this is welcomed by the panel and the panel like the images referenced in the D&A showing a more contemporary bond to the brickwork.

This brickwork however plays a minor part in the scheme and becomes lost as most elements of the facade are glazed or coloured opaque panels within a glazing system set subserviently to the brick. This set back does apply more emphasis on the brickwork but there does need to be a re-balancing of the materials to create a joined-up facade design.

The removal of mass to the corner element at high level provides some relief in the facade and does encourage a turn in the facade down Wilson Road. However, further set back balconies along the Oxford Road elevations are lost in definition and provide a poor quality of space for the user. Furthermore, the balconies to the rear will protrude outwards from the rear facade, enabling views into neighbouring properties and uses which may prove an issue in policy terms. The inclusion of balconies may, in this instance, be seen as a negative, unless a holistic re-design is taken to the facade and layout design enabling better integration and relationships between the inside and out.

Very little detail was provided on the topmost element, and although a dark metallic finish was assumed for this part, the justification for its use was unexplained. Furthermore, the panel is concerned by this element's relationship with the adjoining properties on the Oxford Road, we felt this had not been considered and work would need to be done to ensure that this was not a failure when viewed along Oxford Road.

The ground floor glazing – as discussed in previous points needs more refinement and detailing, and some justification is required for the use of the white structural pillars utilised along the main facade.

Parking and layout of the internal circulation needs more thought as currently the mix of uses do not sit well together and exiting a building directly into a car park access road is not the safest way to exit or approach a building.

Design Approach

This element was distinctly lacking in the presentation where all description and concept work was not touched on. The sketches shown seem to be reverse engineered from the final product in an aim to show design development. The panel hope this is not the case but the lack of contextual input in the D&A and presentation seem to suggest a justification of the final design rather than that of an exploratory and contextual approach to the design.

Any further comments

The panel fully appreciate the applicants willingness to bring the proposals to a design review and the overall reasoning for the building and generation of revenue for a larger community facility (although some way from this site) is a great supporting argument for the redevelopment of the site. This however does not heal all concerns.

The planning team at Reading council asked the panel a simple question in their briefing, and this was –

The officer is seeking the Panel's view on whether the design achieves a landmark status presently. If not whether there are changes which could be made within the context of the existing design, or whether a further complete review of the design would be required.

Firstly the review panel debated the merits of the current designs 'landmark status' and the outcome was that in its current design the development fell short of this status by some margin.

Secondly we discussed at length the final point - "are changes which could be made within the context of the existing design, or whether a further complete review of the design would be required." This is harder to answer as the re-design of the building can be seen (if too far removed from the original application) to be a material change to the original application – especially where the mix, overall GIA and ratios of the uses involved in the original application are changed.

Taking this into account and our comments above we are of the opinion that the changes required for the scheme to ascertain the 'landmark status' are terminal to the current scheme and therefore a full re-design is required. But it is the council's planning team which can only, ultimately make the decision on the acceptance of a full revision on the current application; or if a new, full application is required.



These drawings and designs are the copyright of the architect. They are to be used only for the project for which they are prepared.

Scale: 1:100
 Date: 08/2017
 No: RCC.17 / 151



Community Planning Limited
 100, The Quadrant, Reading, RG1 1AA

COMMUNITY & RESIDENTIAL
 DEVELOPMENT
 553 OXFORD ROAD
 READING

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 AS PROPOSED

NO.	DATE	BY	CHKD
01	08/2017	DK	DK
02	08/2017	DK	DK

RCC.17 / 151 A



These drawings and designs are the copyright of the architect. They are to be used only for the project for which they are prepared.

Scale: 1:100
 Date: 08/2017
 No: RCC.17 / 151



Community Planning Limited
 100, The Quadrant, Reading, RG1 1AA

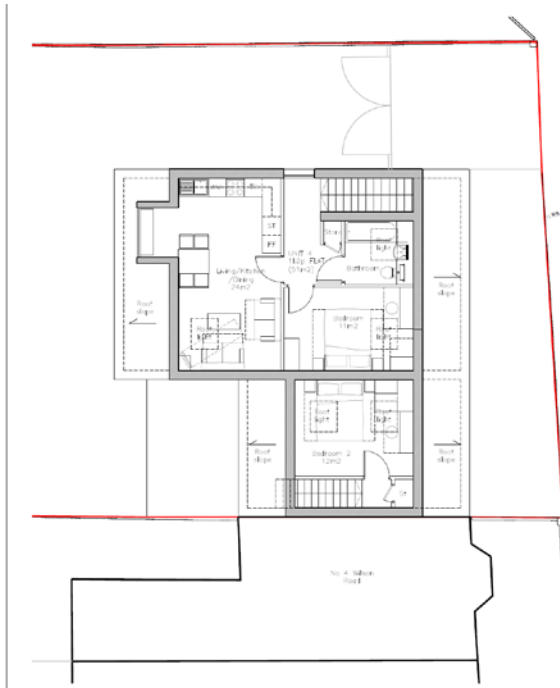
COMMUNITY & RESIDENTIAL
 DEVELOPMENT
 553 OXFORD ROAD
 READING

SECOND FLOOR PLAN
 AS PROPOSED

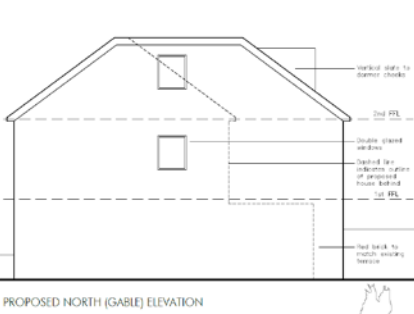
NO.	DATE	BY	CHKD
01	08/2017	DK	DK
02	08/2017	DK	DK

RCC.17 / 152 A





10/10/17 rev Updated following UJ Comments
 date JAN 17
 scale 1:100
 sheet DA
 drawing the SECOND FLOOR/ROOF PLAN



22/01/18 rev Full height window to front elevation omitted at UJ request
 10/10/17 rev Updated following UJ Comments
 date JAN 17
 scale 1:100
 sheet DA
 drawing the PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

