

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 5th December 2018

ITEM NO. 10

Ward: Norcot

App No.: 181555/FUL

Address: Grovelands Baptist Church, 553 Oxford Road, Reading

Proposal: Demolition of existing chapel and church hall. Redevelopment of the site to provide a three storey mixed use development comprising of community halls and ancillary accommodation at ground floor level, 2 x one bedroom flats, 6 x two bedroom flats and 2 x three bedroom flats at the upper floor levels, all with associated external amenity space, car parking and cycle storage.

Applicant: The Trustees of the Gate

Date application valid: 1st September 2018

Major Application 13 week target: 1st December 2018

Extended deadline: 21st December 2018

Planning Guarantee 26 week target: 2nd March 2019

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions and informatives and subject to the satisfactory completion of a S.106 legal agreement.

or

REFUSE permission should the legal agreement not be completed by the 21st December 2018 unless a later date is agreed by the Head of Planning Development & Regulatory Services.

The Section 106 Legal Agreement to secure the following:

Affordable Housing

- On- site - first floor - Unit 1 - 2 bed - affordable rent; Unit 2 - 1 bed - affordable rent; Unit 5 - 3 bed - shared ownership
- Cascade mechanism to ensure that there is a default mechanism of a financial contribution should neither a registered provider nor RBC wish to take on the affordable housing units in the scheme.

Transport

- Parking provision - 6 no. spaces to be provided at the Wilson Road site (171087)

Employment, Skills and Training

- Financial contribution of £2,295 towards Construction Skills

GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions and informatives

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

- 1) Standard Time Limit
- 2) Approved Plans
- 3) Materials and details to be approved
- 4) Detailed elevational plans at 1: 20 scale to be submitted to and approved prior to construction.
- 5) L2a - Landscaping - When details need to be submitted for approval
- 6) L2b - Landscaping implementation
- 7) L3 - Standard Landscaping Maintenance
- 8) Noise -The specific sound level of the plant/equipment hereby approved, LAeqr, Tr

as measured at a point 1 metre external to sensitive facades, shall be at least 10dB below the existing background sound level

- 9) Implementation of approved noise mitigation scheme
- 10) Hours of community use to be 8.00am to 23:00 Monday-Saturday and 10:00 to 21:00 on Sundays and Bank Holidays
- 11) Amplified sound levels within the community space to not exceed 80dB.
- 12) Assessment of contamination.
- 13) Submission of contamination remediation scheme.
- 14) Implementation of approved remediation scheme.
- 15) Reporting of unexpected contamination.
- 16) CMS including control of noise and dust.
- 17) The hours of noisy construction, demolition and associated deliveries shall be restricted to the hours of 08:00hrs to 18:00hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 09:00hrs to 13:00hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays.
- 18) No materials or green waste produced as a result of the clearance of the site, demolition works or construction works associated with the development hereby approved shall be burnt on site.
- 19) DC1 - Vehicle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans
- 20) DC3 - Bicycle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans
- 21) DC6 -Bin storage
- 22) DC7 & DC8 - Parking permits
- 23) Visibility splays to be provided before development
- 24) Car parking management plan prior to occupation
- 25) *Sustainable Drainage* - No development shall take place until details of the design, implementation, maintenance and management plan of the sustainable drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 26) *Sustainable Drainage* - No building / dwelling hereby permitted shall be occupied until the sustainable drainage scheme for the site has been completed in accordance with the submitted and approved details.

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- 1) Terms and conditions.
- 2) Building control approval.
- 3) Encroachment.
- 4) Highways
- 5) Parking permits
- 6) Pre-Commencement conditions.
- 7) CIL- chargeable.
- 8) Positive and proactive.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site known as Grovelands Chapel and the Gate Oxford Road Centre, 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.

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.



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



Rear of the site



Rear elevation of church



Wilson Road

- 1.3 Alongside the previous refused scheme (171086) the applicant submitted a further application for the land between 2-4 Wilson Road (171087), currently a piece of derelict land between the terraces on Wilson Road (photo above) and the rear of premises on Oxford Road. The Wilson Road site application has not yet been determined, but officers are minded to approve that scheme and the affordable housing contribution has been agreed in principle, subject to the completion of the S106 legal agreement. As the Wilson Road site is not a major application the decision can be undertaken under delegated authority. The Wilson Road site is intended to provide some of the parking provision for the application site and therefore there would need to be a clause in the S106 legal agreements linking the two sites together.
- 1.4 The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential properties including Victorian terraces and terraces of commercial uses at ground floor with residential above. Immediately to the south of the site there is a new terrace of three 2 storey dwellings.
- 1.5 On the plan below the application site is shown edged red and 2-4 Wilson Road (171087) edged blue.



2.0 PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Since the applicant obtained planning consent in 2013 at the application site (lapsed permission 12/01577/FUL) the 'Gate' has embarked on a strategic review of their buildings across a number of sites. Church services are now held at their Meadway site and it is the aim that that site will become the central core facility for the Gate; work is progressing on developing a design/ proposal for it. Alongside this it is intended that the application site be redeveloped to retain community space as well as creating residential development. The applicant states in their Design and Access Statement that *"If planning consent is granted for the proposed development at Oxford Road, the proceeds will help the Church maintain its community presence at Oxford Road, as well as help fund the proposed building works at the Meadway site. Both sites will provide significant community assets to serve the local communities for years to come"*.
- 2.2 The applicant engaged in pre-application work with RBC seeking to agree design principles. Pre-application meetings were held in April and July 2018 and a presentation was made to the Design Review Panel on 7th June 2018, and subsequent amended details were provided to the DRP via email. Further details are set out in section 6 below.
- 2.3 The applicant also held a public consultation event with invitations delivered to four hundred properties in the surrounding streets as well as personal invites to all those who objected to the previous application living further afield, all local councillors, and the Reading Civic Society. The applicant posed three key questions on feedback forms as follows:
- 1) Do you have any comments on the proposals?
 - 2) Are there any aspects of the design you think should be addressed?
 - 3) Do you think any issues may arise from the proposals?
- 2.4 Comments received are summarised in the Design and Access Statement (DAS), and the applicant sets out elements included in this planning submission in response including:
- Existing bell tower to be refurbished and incorporated into the corner tower design
 - Reference to existing church features used as a concept in the final design
 - Gables option elevations developed
 - Contrasting red brick colours emphasised in the final design
- 2.5 Further details are set out in the DAS.
- 2.6 Car parking and affordable housing principles were also agreed at pre-application stage with RBC's Housing and Transport teams.
- 2.7 It is proposed to demolish the existing buildings on the church site and to replace it with a new building which includes the following:
- A nursery for up to 26 no. 2-4 year olds run by a social enterprise arm of the church called 'Love Your Community'
 - 370 sqm community facilities on the ground floor comprising 3 no. meeting halls (Halls 1 & 2 for use by the nursery during nursery hours - up to 24 no. 2-4 year olds and 4 no. staff), kitchen within the main foyer, 2 no. staff rooms and a manager's office. The Church intends to run a community café in the foyer space.

- Rear outdoor soft play area for the nursery to be screened from the car park.
- 10 flats over floors one and two with 3 affordable housing units - 2x3 beds; 6x 2beds, and 2x1 beds as follows:

First Floor

Unit 1 - 2 bed 3 person - 62sqm (affordable unit)

Unit 2 - 1 bed 2 person- 50sqm (affordable unit)

Unit 3 - 2 bed 4 person- 70sqm

Unit 4 - 2 bed 4 person - 75sqm

Unit 5 - 3 bed 6 person - 100sqm (affordable unit)

Second Floor

Unit 6 - 2 bed 3 person - 62sqm

Unit 7 - 1 bed 2 person- 50sqm

Unit 8 - 2 bed 4 person- 70sqm

Unit 9 - 2 bed 4 person - 75sqm

Unit 10 - 3 bed 6 person - 100sqm

- 11 car parking spaces (4 residential and 7 community/nursery use) (remainder of residential parking, 6no. spaces, to be provided at the Wilson Road site)
- 11 cycle parking spaces (Allocated to the residential units of the application site and the Wilson Road site)

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 2.8 The proposed scheme would generate in the region of £121, 661 (CIL), based on £147.29 (2018 indexed figure) per sqm of GIA.
- 2.9 The following plans and supporting documents have been assessed:

Received 3rd September 2018 (unless otherwise stated):

- Location Plan - Drawing no: 100
- Site Block Plan - Drawing no: 101B
- Existing Site Plan and Floor Plans Survey - Drawing no: 120
- Existing Elevations Survey - Drawing no:130
- Proposed Elevations North and West - Drawing no: 160D
- Proposed Elevations South and East - Drawing no: 161C
- Ground Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 150F, received 30th October 2018
- First Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no:151D
- Second Floor Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 152D
- Roof Plan as Proposed - Drawing no: 154B
- Proposed 3D View at Junction of Wilson Road and Oxford Road - Drawing no: 140C
- Proposed Surface Water Drainage Plan - Drawing no: 170A

Other Documents received 3rd September 2018 (unless otherwise stated):

- Affordable Housing Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects, Revision A - 30th August 2018
- Air Quality Assessment, Document ref: P2894.2.1. 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 2018 Pre-Assessment, prepared by MES Building Solutions, dated 23rd August 2018

- CIL form, Revision A, received 12th November 2018
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects, Rev B, received 12th November 2018
- Energy and Sustainability Statement, prepared by MES Building Solution, dated 28th August 2018
- Environmental Noise Assessment V2, document ref: M3956, prepared by Ian Sharland Ltd, dated 29th August 2018
- Heritage Statement, prepared by CPL Chartered Architects, Revision B dated 10th October 2018, received 17th October 2018
- 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, Revision B, received 12th November 2018
- Transport Statement, document ref 8170569/MB/DW/002 Issue 1, prepared by Glanville, dated 20th June 2017

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."

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.

171086/ FUL - 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 - Refused 27/2/18

This was considered by Planning Applications Committee in February 2018 and was refused 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 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. 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.

5. 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, and*
- 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).*

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

(i) Statutory

4.1 None

(ii) Non-statutory

Ecology

4.2 The bat survey report (Agb Environmental, June 2017) has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and details the results of a preliminary roost assessment survey and one dusk emergence and one dawn re-entry surveys carried out in June. The report states that no bats emerged or re-entered the buildings and concluded that they are unlikely to host roosting bats. As such, since bats and other protected species are very unlikely to be affected by the proposals, there are no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

RBC - Environmental Protection and Nuisance

4.3 Noise impact on development - A noise assessment should be submitted in support of applications for new residential proposed in noisy areas. The noise assessment will be assessed against the recommendations for internal noise levels within dwellings and external noise levels within gardens / balconies in accordance with BS 8233:2014 and WHO guidelines for Community Noise. The report should identify any mitigation measures that are necessary to ensure that the recommended standard is

met. Where appropriate, the noise assessment data should also include noise events (L_AMax) and the design should aim to prevent noise levels from noise events exceeding 45dB within bedrooms at night. Noise levels above 45dB are linked with sleep disturbance.

- 4.4 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. It is recommended that a condition be attached to consent to ensure that the glazing (and ventilation) recommendations of the noise assessment (and air quality assessment, where relevant) will be followed, or that alternative but equally or more effective glazing and ventilation will be used.
- 4.5 Noise generating development -
(i) *Plant noise* - 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.
- 4.6 The noise assessment submitted has been carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 and the methodology has been correctly applied. The assessment concludes that the specific noise level of the proposed plant will not exceed -10dB below the background noise and the rating level does not exceed the background noise so adverse impact on the local noise climate is unlikely. The applicants have not provided details of the actual proposed plant or predicted noise levels and the noise assessment simply identified the noise limit of 37dB based on the daytime background noise level of 47dB. It is assumed from the noise assessment that plant is not expected to operate between 23:00hrs and 07:00hrs? Whilst it is preferable to have actual plant details upfront, if you are minded to consent without this, I would recommend a condition.
- 4.7 (ii) *Community centre use* - The ground floor is proposed for community use. The noise assessment for transmission of noise from this use on the residential dwellings is based on noise levels of 80dB (the sound level of shouting). I am not sure the extent of community uses planned to be held there but restricting hours of use to 08:00hrs to 23:00hrs is recommended as well as restricting amplified music sound levels to not exceed 80dB would be a good catch all whilst allowing the community centre flexibility of use.
- 4.8 Air Quality - The air quality assessment concludes that there will be no increased exposure as the levels at the site are predicted to fall below action levels.
- 4.9 Contaminated Land - Where development is proposed, the developer is responsible for ensuring that development is safe for the intended purpose or can be made so by remedial action. A phase 1 assessment has been submitted which concludes that a phase 2 assessment is necessary. Investigation must be carried out by a suitably qualified person to ensure that the site is suitable for the proposed use or can be made so by remedial action. Conditions are recommended to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination.
- 4.10 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 - Housing Strategy

- 4.11 The offer of 2 units (1x1bed and 1x 2bed) at affordable rents and a 3rd (1x3bed) for shared ownership is acceptable, subject to including the standard cascade clause into the S106 for a commuted sum, should registered providers not agree to take on a couple flats in a shared block.

RBC - Natural Environment

- 4.12 The concern with the 2017 application was the lack of landscaping on the Oxford Road frontage in view of the road being identified as being a 'treed corridor' in our Tree Strategy and the also the general lack of landscaping in view of the site being in a 10% or less canopy cover area, as identified in our Tree Strategy.
- 4.13 I note, with reference to the Design & Access Statement Rev A - August 2018 and Ground Floor Plan as Proposed RCC.17 / 150 E, that landscaping has been incorporated at the rear of the site and within planters on the Oxford Road and Wilson Road frontages. Given the site constraints, the use of planters is the only feasible option, hence the landscaping principles are acceptable. I therefore have no objections subject to conditions - landscaping details to be submitted; landscaping implementation; and landscaping maintenance.
- 4.14 In terms of justifying a pre-commencement condition, it is important in this case due to the importance of the need for landscaping, i.e. we need to ensure the implementation of the landscaping has been considered at an early stage particularly as the construction of planters will be carried out alongside building construction

RBC - Transport

- 4.15 *Planning Officer note:* The following comments are the final ones from Transport. These followed the submission of an amended ground floor plan to widen the car park access to 4.1m; residents' cycle store width widened to 3.1m internally; and 6m manoeuvre zone in front of parking space 1, which has resulted in the creation of another small cycle store under the communal stair for community/nursery use so that nursery/community cycle provision is increased from 5 spaces to 6.
- 4.16 The proposed development consists of a mixed-use development located at the two closely related sites 553 Oxford Road and land between 2 and 4 Wilson Road (171087), Reading, this proposal is a resubmission of 171086.
- 4.17 This application comprises of the following:

Oxford Road site

- Community Hall 98-142m² Gross Floor Area (GFA)
- x6 Two Bed Flats
- x2 One Bed Flats
- x2 three bed flats
- Nursery for up to 24 Two to Four Year Old Children and Four Staff, with Flexible Pick Up and Drop Off Time
- 11 Car Parking Spaces (4 residential and 7 nursery / community uses)
- 11 Cycle Parking Spaces (Allocated to the Residential Units of Both Sites)

Wilson Road site

- x1 Two Bed House
- x3 One Bed Flats
- 7 Car Parking Spaces (Including 6 Allocated to Oxford Road Flats), and
- 4 Cycle Parking Spaces (Allocated to the Community Hall and the Nursery).

4.18 The Wilson Road site is the subject of a separate planning application reference 171087. *Planning Officer note: as referred to above that proposal is considered to be acceptable and officers are minded to approve that scheme. That site and the application site would be linked via a Section 106 legal agreement for the parking provision.*

4.19 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

4.20 The Oxford Road site proposes a new entrance location that was accepted as part of the consented scheme, this access is a minimum of 4.1m in width and so it is sufficient for two-way movement.

4.21 The existing footway crossover will be removed, and the footway brought up to full height. However, in reviewing the changes it has been identified that a speed hump is located within proximity to the existing and proposed vehicular access on Wilson Road. A revised drawing has therefore been submitted adjusting the location of the proposed access so that it does not conflict with the location of the speed hump and this is deemed acceptable.

4.22 A revised drawing will be required illustrating the visibility splay given the relocation of the access but I am happy for this to be dealt with by way of a condition given that it would be an improvement to the north over the current arrangement. Visibility to the south would be reduced but Wilson Road is one-way and therefore would not have a detrimental impact on Highway safety.

4.23 In line with the previous assessment the visibility splay would need to be 2.4 x 25m with a 20mph speed limit as set out in Manual for Streets. The drawings in Appendix C of the Transport Statement previously illustrated the visibility splay going through a wall / planter, any revised visibility splay is likely to be outside of this wall / planter but if not the wall and planting will need to be less than 600mm in height and is included within the condition referenced above.

Trip Rate and Traffic Generation

4.24 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.

4.25 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.

4.26 It has been noted that the community use has been based on a floor area of 145m² which is the maximum floor space available and removes the nursery floor area. 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.

- 4.27 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.
- 4.28 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.
- 4.29 The number of vehicle trips that would be generated in the peak hours would approximately 16 in total and it should also be noted that this takes account of no reduction in trips that could have been generated by the existing use. Overall 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

- 4.30 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.
- 4.31 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 Provision Strategy

Land Use	Parking Provision
Housing – 1 Bed	0
Housing – 2 Bed	1 Per Unit (Required)
Housing – 3 Bed	2 Per Unit (Required)
Community Use	1 Per 20 m2 (Maximum)
D1 Day Nurseries with Flexible Pick Up and Drop Off Time	1 Per 3 FTE Staff Plus (Maximum)

- 4.32 The above standards suggest that the development should provide the following car parking:
- Residential: 10 car parking spaces
 - Community Hall: 7 car parking spaces, and
 - Nursery: 1 car parking space for staff and 2 for parents.
- 4.33 The following section sets out how this parking demand is met by each of the components of the development.

Residential

- 4.34 Two car parking spaces will be allocated to each of the 3-Bed residential units, one in the case of each of the 2-Bed residential units. No parking spaces are provided for the 1-bed flats. It is noted that the 2-Bed residential units within the Oxford Road site will have allocated parking spaces within the adjacent Wilson Road site,

equating to 6 spaces. The 3-bed residential units located on the Oxford Road site will be provided with the required number of 4 spaces on the application site. Overall this equates to a parking demand of 10 spaces and has been deemed acceptable given that the applicant has agreed that the future residents of the development would not be eligible to apply for residents' parking permits.

Nursery

- 4.35 One car parking space will be allocated for staff of the nursery in compliance with the above standard and one space will be allocated for parents. The standard suggests that the nursery would generate the demand for two parent parking spaces to facilitate the drop off and pick up of children. The remaining demand for one parent parking space for drop off and pick up would be met by the existing short term parking bays (max 30 minute stay) adjacent to the site on Oxford Road or the bays located along Wilson Road. This level of additional short term parking demand would not have a noticeable effect on parking supply and as such the provision of 2 spaces has been deemed acceptable.

Community Hall

- 4.36 The community hall is relatively small at 98-142m² (depending on configuration) and it is anticipated that it will be used mainly by local residents. The site is in a highly sustainable location and therefore visitors to the site will be able to walk, cycle or travel to the by public transport. As such, it is anticipated that the actual parking demand will be below the seven spaces suggested by the standard assuming halls 1, 2 and 3 are joined together.
- 4.37 Notwithstanding the above assessment identifying that parking demand is likely to be below the seven spaces suggested by the standard, assuming halls 1, 2 and 3 are joined together, the following assessment will consider how a parking demand for up to seven cars would be met.
- 4.38 The users of the community hall would have use of five allocated spaces. During the day, it is stated that residual users would be permitted to use the residents' parking spaces within the site, however this cannot be accepted as this is likely to result in conflict. Any residential parking should be retained solely for residents. However, during the day when the nursery is in use this would reduce the usable hall space to 98m² and therefore the parking demand would reduce to 5 spaces which is being proposed, the proposal therefore does not require the sharing of spaces during the day.
- 4.39 In the evenings, residual users of the community hall would be able to use the two spaces allocated to the nursery totalling the 7 spaces required to meet the Councils parking standards.
- 4.40 The above therefore guarantees a car parking allocation of the following:
- 7 dedicated spaces for the community hall/nursery;
 - 1 space per unit for 6, two bed units i.e. 6 residential spaces;
 - 2 spaces per unit for 2, 3 bed units i.e. 4 residential spaces; and
 - The remaining one-bed units would be car free.
- 4.41 This ensures that the parking for the community hall / nursery and the residential complies with Policy. However, given that the parking allocation is spread over two sites the proposal will require the provision of a car park management plan but I am happy for this to be dealt with by way of a condition.

- 4.42 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.
- 4.43 The car parking layout has been updated and I can confirm that this now complies with Policy.
- 4.44 The Transport Statement has stated that the development will require a provision of cycle parking that complies with the following:

Table 2: RBC Cycle Parking Standards

Land Use	Standard
Day nursery	1 per 2 FTE staff
D1 Places of Worship/ Church Hall	1 per 50 m2
Flat 1/2 bed	0.5 per 1 flat
House 2/3 bed	2 per 1 house

- 4.45 The standards suggest that the development should provide the following cycle parking spaces:
- Residential: 8 cycle parking spaces
 - Community Hall: 3 cycle parking spaces, and
 - Nursery: 2 cycle parking spaces.
- 4.46 The development provides six secure covered cycle parking spaces dedicated for the residential use and six cycle parking spaces for the nursery and the community hall within the Oxford Road site. Four secure covered cycle parking spaces will also be dedicated for the residential use within the Wilson Road site. This provision is in excess of the Councils standards and therefore complies with Policy.
- 4.47 The cycle parking layout complies with standards and therefore is acceptable.
- 4.48 Refuse can be collected from Wilson Road with refuse collection areas located within 15m of the carriageway. The refuse doors open out but this is not over the Public Highway so is deemed acceptable. However, it should be confirmed through the Waste Management Department whether the number of bins illustrated is sufficient to serve the development.
- 4.49 In the circumstances there are no transport objections subject to conditions - CMS, vehicle parking spaces provided in accordance with approved plans, Bicycle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans, bin storage, no entitlement to parking permits, visibility splays before occupation, car parking management plan.

(iii) Public/ local consultation and comments received

- 4.50 Notification letters were sent to 2-20 Wilson Road (even), 1c Wilson Road 543-555 Oxford Road (odd), 500-510 Oxford Road (even), 2-12 (even) Wantage Road, and all previous respondents to the refused application 171086 (totalling a further 33 households), a notice in the press and a site notice displayed. 18 responses were received, including 7 no. in support.

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

Parking issues

- Cause excessive congestion in an already congested area.
- 10 residences and only 4 parking spaces for residents! How on earth is that going to work without conflict?
- I do not believe the parking and transport plans will adequately deal with the issues having a nursery, community use and residential use of the building will cause to existing residents.

Design/ Loss of Building

- English Heritage recognises this as a beautiful building built by a famous Reading architect. Something like this can NEVER be replaced.
- The overall look of the building is now in keeping with the existing building. The inclusion of the existing bell tower will be a great asset, giving a continued history.
- The new building will be able to contain all sorts of new life, not least the proposed nursery school for which there is a need in Reading of quality nursery provision.
- The new plans are attractive, functional and will be a great asset to the local community.
- The level of anti-social behaviour taking place in the rear car park of the chapel, is causing distress to local residents. By re-developing this site the opportunity for a small minority to engage in such behaviour is removed. Wilson Road deserves better.
- Support request for local listing made by Reading Civic Society.
- This is a unique heritage building which fits within the context of the local area. We would expect that, if at the end of its useful life as a church, it would be adapted for an alternative use rather than demolished.
- A very large residential development and the mass of the proposed building will dominate the road.
- The installation of balconies on Wilson Road side is objected to, they are out of keeping with all other neighbouring residential properties and will feel like they are overhanging the road, and would not complement the pre-1914 streetscape.
- Appreciate the pointed gables and the bell tower on the North elevation of the main building, but can there be some more imagination involved, to make an attractive and fitting design? I hate to lose an eccentric historical building - some style is required for its replacement.
- While the Design and Access Statement goes into a considerable level of detail of townscape impacts, there does not appear to be any specific assessment in the application of the heritage impacts of the loss of the existing building as a non-designated heritage asset in its own right, and of its proposed replacement on the settings of nearby listed buildings.
- The design of the proposed building neither justifies the loss of the existing building, nor does it provide a building of high quality design that is respectful of its local context.
- Although, smaller than previous application, the proposal is still too imposing - far larger than surrounding buildings and its block multi floor structure is very different to existing sloping roof of church.
- The existing chapel is described as handsome and well-composed by English Heritage. They also say "The quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context" As such, to destroy the building any replacement has a high architectural expectation. The proposed structure echoes only the most basic

architectural details and clumsily adds the existing bell to the corner of the site. While I welcome efforts to retain the character of the building I feel that this design falls considerably short of what would be needed to justify destruction of the current landmark building.

- The current design from the north elevation addresses previous issues with scale and style.
- The west elevation (Wilson Road) continues to be overbearing and out of scale with surrounding properties. While the gable end mirrors the current structure, the additional bulk of the proposed building dwarfs surrounding buildings and is further accentuated by the addition of balconies. It is requested that this additional element is removed or at the very least reduced in scale (reduction of a storey and reduction of depth) to transition more appropriately into the street scene.
- Replacement with a building which, while more sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area than the previous application 171086, still has major design faults,
- From a sustainability perspective, object to the demolition and replacement rather than re-purposing and re-using an existing building.
- The building would have been listed if not for the loss of the internal features.
- Built of red/brown brick with a steep, red-tiled gabled roof, with varied fenestration including two arrangements of windows which give the impression of 'Venetian'-style windows, also a low square tower with a cupola. The building fits into its context of late-Victorian and Edwardian neighbours and enhances the streetscape without unduly dominating the surrounding houses.
- There are not many buildings in this Arts and Crafts style in Reading, compared to our Georgian and Victorian legacy, and to lose such a significant example would be a disaster in heritage terms.

Affordable housing

- While affordable housing proposed appears to comply nominally with RBC policy, it is unclear whether a RSL would be willing to partner with the Church in the development of the small number of affordable units proposed. This would in my view need to be justified by confirmation by a RSL. It may be that, for any otherwise acceptable scheme, a larger proportion of the overall residential units to be provided would need to be designated as affordable, for a RSL to be able to partner with the Church as developer.

Impact on residential amenity

- Will residents have access to the garden space that leads off the nursery?
- Balcony proposals risk overlooking of neighbours.
- The rear of the proposed building continues to overlook private gardens of properties on Wantage and Wilson Roads. It is requested that oriel windows are added to maintain the current privacy of these spaces.
- The DAS states that the living rooms/balconies [northern elevation] have been designed with perforated metal balustrades which allow diffuse light to penetrate whilst obscuring views into living rooms. These would not get much light anyway and to have it diffused through a metal screen would make them even darker. Are they fit for purpose?

Community Use

- I believe it will have a positive effect on the local community.
- There is an indication that the community spaces are a benefit to the local area. Why is the current hall not opened as a community space?
- There are no sleeping areas in the nursery. If this is a true nursery, it would need more than two toilets and a proper changing area.

Other

- Loss of a church is racist against Catholics.
- This appears to be a much better use for the space. As a former resident of the Oxford Road I can see how such plans would be better for the community around it.
- More flats are not needed in this location.
- The plans show the existing church hall backing on to an outbuilding. This is in fact an occupied flat and will therefore be impacted by noise from car parking and use of the nursery outside space.

- 4.51 The applicant provided specific responses to some points raised by objectors as follows. They also provided a specific letter response to the Civic Society's objection letter (both letters are included in Appendix 1 below):

"Whilst we had considered the impact on setting of the nearby listed buildings, we hadn't previously included this in the Heritage Statement and this wasn't raised by the heritage team for the last application. For completeness, we have added this to our Heritage Statement [see Heritage Statement revision B]

As far as I'm aware it is not a planning requirement to have confirmation of partnership from an RSL. The scheme complies with affordable housing policy and RBC housing team has confirmed as much.

We have comprehensively engaged with RBC on the matter of design and we submitted the application only once we had your [without prejudice] confirmation that the 'proposed scheme appears to respond positively to previous concerns and as an overall approach I consider it to be satisfactory'.

Regardless of ...opinion on appearance of the new design as a justification (or otherwise) of loss of the chapel, in the wider context of the NPPF and local policy, decisions should be in favour of sustainable development. The D&A and Heritage Statements set out the various and significant benefits offered by the development, which in addition to the contextually appropriate design which is of similar scale, form and materiality to the chapel, and makes historical reference to important chapel features (including retention of the bell tower) all help outweigh the loss of the non-designated heritage asset."

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 Practice Guidance - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
(Feb 2018)

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
Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7 (May 2016), Historic England

6.0 APPRAISAL

Main considerations:

The main issues to be considered are:

- i) Principle of Uses
- ii) Design and Appearance
- iii) Loss of Undesignated 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 community and residential uses for the site are considered acceptable.
- 6.2 The ground floor of the church is currently in use as a community facility and the proposed ground floor would be a new community facility of 370m² in gross internal floor area, the same floor area as existing. 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 and to accommodate several small groups using the space concurrently or one larger group. 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 an undesignated heritage asset, traffic, mix, affordable housing, and infrastructure requirements, which are discussed below.

(ii) Design and Appearance

6.5 Since the previous refused scheme (171086) the applicant has worked with RBC officers to develop a more appropriately designed scheme, with draft options being presented to the Design Review Panel and being consulted on with the public prior to formal submission (as detailed in the Design and Access Statement section 1.04).

6.6 At the previous planning committee it was agreed that the loss of the historic building could be justified provided that the replacement building:

- is of a high quality design which responds positively to its context and enhances the character of the area
- is of appropriate height, mass and appearance
- avoids overlooking and loss of amenity/privacy to neighbouring properties

6.7 Notwithstanding the issue of whether the loss of the building is justified, which is addressed in section (iii) below, in policy terms (NPPF and CS7) any proposal needs to be of a high standard of design that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area within which it is located.

6.8 The existing building (elevation below) is considered to be prominent and distinctive with red brick construction, which is in keeping with other buildings in the surrounding area including Brock Barracks.



6.9 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.

- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 The refused scheme (171086 - image below) was considered to be in stark contrast to the existing character and appearance of the surrounding area leading to reasons for refusal relating in broad terms to height and mass, as set out in section 3 above.



- 6.12 Although amendments were made to materials, amenity space, balconies, overall mass and landscaping, these were not sufficient to remove the fundamental concerns at the time.
- 6.13 The proposed scheme has resulted from iterations developed over the past months which have been reviewed by the Design Review Panel and officers. The applicant has presented in detail in the DAS how they consider the proposed scheme responds to matters raised through this process. The design development of the Oxford Road frontage is shown in the elevation images below (as set out in the DAS).



- 6.14 The proposed building has taken features which are evident in the existing building and interpreted these in a modern way, whilst retaining the traditional references in terms of the gables, tower, and the proposed materials.
- 6.15 The proposed building is at the same height as the existing terrace of shops/residential on Oxford Road, however officers advised the applicant that a prominent corner would be acceptable to give the proposed scheme dominance in the streetscene and to retain it as a landmark site. This is considered to have been achieved with the use of a taller angular tower, which steps out from the rest of the façade and creates a hierarchy of form.
- 6.16 Further to comments at the consultation event the existing cupola and bell tower are proposed to be incorporated within this tower, to retain this key element of the existing building. The Civic Society considers the tower too dominant and that the cupola and bell tower would be like a 'pimple'. Officer opinion however is that a smaller tower would not create a feature, as was intended, and its function would be very different to that of the existing building. The use of cupola and bell tower is intended as a reference to the existing rather than a replication of it, and the relationship between the two will be different.
- 6.17 The proposed floor levels and window positions on Oxford Road are considered to tie in effectively with the existing adjoining terraces of commercial/ residential uses, and the proposed smaller gable features along Oxford Road are also considered to be sympathetic to the existing pitched dormers of the existing adjoining buildings.
- 6.18 In terms of the Wilson Road elevation the refused scheme was considered to be too large and too high and was overbearing when viewed alongside the domestic, largely two storey dwellings, of Wilson Road. The design development of this elevation is shown below (as in the DAS).



2017 Planning application design – houses to the south (right) were un-built at time of application



2018 Preliminary Sketch Option 1 (small gables) – mass reduced, greater separation from houses on Wilson Rd



2018 Preliminary Sketch Option 3 – large gable, square tower, roof design relates to houses



2018 Planning Design (large gable as per chapel, square tower with retained bell, roof form steps down)

- 6.19 The proposed scheme is significantly smaller in depth/ proximity to existing buildings on Wilson Road and lower in height than the refused scheme. Although still 3 storeys along this elevation it is considered that the separation between this and the existing dwellings on Wilson Road of some 10m would be sufficient to not create an overbearing scheme. As a corner plot a larger scale of form compared to adjacent buildings is considered to be acceptable.
- 6.20 The form is also enhanced (compared to the refused scheme) through the shape and size of windows, materials and pitched/hipped roof form.
- 6.21 The materials proposed are clay facing brickwork with contrasting brickwork, using a mixture of brick bonds and projecting brick banding and header courses to create a range of depth and texture. These materials reflect the existing prominent ones in the area. A metal, standing seam roof has been selected to fit with the tone and colour of slate roofs, but provide flexibility for roof form.
- 6.22 An image of the proposed scheme is shown below.



- 6.23 There are limited opportunities for landscaping and public realm, however by using the building line of the existing properties on Oxford Road, but with a slight change of angle, as is the case with the existing building, small areas of public realm have been created through the use of planters to the front and rear of the site. The Natural Environment officer has confirmed that due to the site constraints that the use of planters is the only feasible option and is acceptable, subject to conditions.
- 6.24 It is considered that the proposed scheme does enhance the character and appearance of the area in accordance with policy CS7 and NPPF. The quality of materials will be important and a condition is recommended for the submission and approval of these prior to development as well as more detailed drawings of the elevations.
- (iii) Loss of Non-Designated Heritage Asset
- 6.25 The building is not nationally listed, and although English Heritage (as was commented (2009) that *"the quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context"*, they also stated that *"while of local interest for its pleasing elevations, the external architectural quality is not sufficiently high to outweigh the loss of the interior"*.

- 6.26 Since the refusal of the previous scheme in February 2018 the application site has been locally listed and therefore is now a non-designated heritage asset; this took place during the application process. Local listing provides no additional planning controls, but its conservation as a non-designated heritage asset is an objective of the NPPF and a material planning consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application. It should be noted that at the time of assessing the previous scheme the existing building was already being considered as a locally important historic building and this has now been formalised into local listing.
- 6.27 The NPPF and policy CS33 gives a presumption in favour of their conservation and their loss requires appropriate and proportionate justification. Advice in the Historic England advice note (2016) states that *"In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."* In other words it needs to be assessed whether the loss of the non-designated heritage asset, taking into account its significance², is outweighed by the planning benefits of the scheme.
- 6.28 Significance is defined in the NPPF glossary as *"the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."* The local listing for the application site, which uses the criterion in section 9.1 of the SDPD, identifies that the building dating from 1840-1913 is substantially complete and unaltered, and has historic and architectural interest (Local listing included at Appendix 3).
- 6.29 Para 184 of the NPPF states that heritage assets *"...should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations"* At present the church is contributing very little to the quality of life of residents, and although its loss would have a detrimental effect on the overall significance there are a number of positive benefits to the proposed scheme, which are considered to outweigh the loss. Although predating the local listing, the previous permission in 2013, which included demolition of the buildings, is a material consideration.
- 6.30 Officers made it clear during the course of the previous refused application that in order to justify the building's replacement, any new building would need to be of a high design quality that maintains a landmark/ feature while successfully integrating with the streetscene. The previous scheme was not considered to achieve this. Therefore, there was not a sufficient benefit to outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of the existing building and hence it was refused. However, it was accepted at the previous committee (Feb 2018) that the loss of the historic building could be justified provided that the replacement building:
- is of a high quality design which responds positively to its context and enhances the character of the area;
 - is of appropriate height, mass and appearance;
 - avoids overlooking and loss of amenity/privacy to neighbouring properties.
- 6.31 It is considered that the proposed building would be of a high design quality, as addressed above, and would have an appropriate mass and height, making a positive

² The significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its archaeological, architectural, historic, and artistic interest

contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the area and would have prominence in the local context, but without dominating neighbouring properties.

6.32 The proposed scheme would reflect the scale, proportion, form and materiality of the existing building, making historical reference to it including the retention of the cupola and bell tower, and re-using some of the stained glass for internal glazed screens. Through further discussion with the applicant they have also proposed re-using the date stone and giving consideration to re-using the existing stone course and stone window jamb, mullion and transom sections provided that the stonework is of adequate quantity/ quality for use in a meaningful, not piecemeal way. The wider setting would not be detrimentally affected and the proposed materials would be sympathetic to the existing.

6.33 Para 185 of the NPPF *"refers to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation."* Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Practice Guidance Chapter on 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment', states that *"disrepair and damage and their impact on viability can be a material consideration in deciding an application"*. Paragraph 15 states *"If there is a range of alternative viable uses, the optimum use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset"* In this instance, however, the applicants have advised that there is no viable option to enable the building to be re-used in a sustainable way. This is a material consideration in the overall planning balance.

6.34 From a viability perspective:

- To refurbish the existing buildings for community use only, which would require bringing it up to current building regulation requirements, would be cost prohibitive. Even if there were new residential development at first floor, as a means to subsidise the development, these units would reduce the amount of community space at the ground floor, in order to accommodate stairs and a lift. In addition they would be less energy efficient than new build and would require significant alterations to the building fabric to achieve adequate daylight and ventilation.
- To create a more substantial scheme, comparable to the application proposal, would require enabling development in the form of major extensions and alterations, which would in themselves affect the significance of the building.

6.35 The current building does not offer an efficient use of this brownfield site as its current form and condition severely limits how the building can be used. The applicant has confirmed that it is currently used two evenings a week for church fellowship/ prayer meetings and they have provided further details of the specific safety concerns/ issue with the building, which prohibits its use for the range of community uses and nursery that the proposed scheme is offering. These are summarised as follows:

Safety

1. The plasterwork is deteriorating due to damp, and has been falling off the walls.
2. A few years ago the front porch roof caved in. This has been rectified but it is understood that an underlying structural issue causes risk of this happening again.
3. Falling roof tiles from the main roof have caused the modern suspended ceiling tiles to collapse/fall. The church has continued to repair roof tiles however the

issue persists. Without a wholesale refurbishment of the entire roof, this will continue to happen and the cost of such works has been prohibitively expensive. The issues with the main roof cause regular water ingress. Despite roof maintenance, certain parts of the building suffer from water ingress whenever it rains.

Quality of environment

4. Despite regular investment and maintenance, the heating system is inadequate and regularly breaks down. Even when the heating system works, it is inefficient as the building does not retain heat due to the un-insulated nature of the solid masonry walls, floor and roof. The cost of replacement of the heating system would only be worthwhile if the building fabric were thermally upgraded, which is prohibitively expensive.
5. The relationship of the outdoor areas to the internal hall is not practical given stepped access and not practical as a play space due to lack of natural surveillance from inside the building.
6. The kitchen is not compliant with modern day environmental health standards and if upgraded would be too small for a number of the intended standards.
7. The quality of natural light is poor in certain spaces.
8. Ventilation and thus air quality is poor.

Accessibility

9. The building does not contain disabled toilet facilities. The space constraints of the existing structure prevent adaptation of the existing sanitary facilities to provide accessible toilet accommodation.
10. The building does not have level access throughout.
11. Existing doors (weights and clear widths) and clear widths of circulation spaces are not suitable for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility. They do not comply with modern standards and could not easily be adapted without costly structural alterations.

Lack of flexibility of hall space

12. The main chapel space is one large volume. This makes it impractical for smaller groups in terms of heating, privacy, lighting and acoustics, and the applicant has advised that it is not practical to subdivide the space due to limited fire exits and all ancillary accommodation being on one side of the building. Therefore it is not practical for the building to be used by multiple groups concurrently.

6.36 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development, supported at local level with the SDPD policy SD1. Achieving this is through securing net gains across key objectives. With regard to the social objective the proposed scheme would provide a number of new affordable homes to lifetime standards, many of which would be suitable for family accommodation. It would provide a flexible and enhanced community space, in accordance with Policy CS31, including a drop-in café, which would contribute to meeting the community's social well-being.

6.37 As part of this community space there would be a new nursery to be run by the applicant's social outreach arm: 'Love your Community'. The applicant also intends to offer the following community groups/uses. The applicant has advised that these are already run successfully by the church at another one of its sites:

1. Toddler group for mums/carers and toddlers
2. Afterschool clubs
3. Parenting Course
4. Marriage Course

5. CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Course - which is a course which teaches people budgeting skills and to help get in control of their finances and prevent debt
 6. The community spaces would be available to hire by a wide range of public groups/uses, such as children's parties, craft groups etc
 7. The church has a history of partnership with the borough council to provide services for community benefit. If planning approval is granted the church will actively pursue continued partnership to help the council with service provision in the Oxford Road area, using the new building.
- 6.38 The use of the site, incorporating residential development, would assist in making the site safer as there would be a greater level of natural surveillance of the external space, which according to a response to the public consultation currently has problems with anti-social behaviour.
- 6.39 The proposed scheme would contribute to the environmental objective through making effective use of land, increasing the range of uses and developing a more energy efficient building.
- 6.40 The applicant has been open about their changed requirements since the lapsed permission, with their Meadway site becoming the focus for church and community facilities. They have identified the need to develop a viable scheme at Oxford Road, to contribute to their wider community aims including at the Meadway, but also with the intention of enhancing the application site to give it an improved function and role in the local community. The applicant has worked with officers since the refused scheme to develop an acceptable scheme, which has addressed design, amenity, affordable housing, and transport concerns. It is considered that the benefits offered by the proposed scheme, in addition to the sensitive design, as described above, being material to the planning balance, are sufficient to outweigh the loss of the non-designated heritage asset.
- (iv) Density and Mix of Housing
- 6.41 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.
- 6.42 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 121 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 (6 of the 10 proposed), providing the potential of family accommodation and to Lifetime Home standards. The proposed density is considered acceptable.
- (v) Residential Amenity
- 6.43 Despite amendments to the previous scheme (171086) during the application period there were still concerns over the penthouse terrace at third floor and balconies at second floor. The reasons for refusal therefore included amenity related reasons

because it was considered that these elements would have a detrimental effect on the privacy of neighbouring properties from overlooking.

- 6.44 The proposed scheme has no rear balconies and no terraces, and rear facing windows at First and Second Floors (Unit 1 & 6 - those closest to Wilson Road properties) are proposed as oriel windows.
- 6.45 With regard to rear facing windows for Units 5 and 10 these are at almost 19m away from the boundary with the rear garden of the recently built houses (under permission ref: 160180). These windows serve bedrooms or bathrooms, and not considered as habitable rooms and in any case are considered to be at a sufficient distance from neighbouring gardens to not lead to a significant detrimental effect on overlooking and loss of privacy.
- 6.46 There is one balcony proposed per unit and these are on the Oxford Road and Wilson Road Elevations only. Issues have been raised through consultation regarding their design and amenity, but these are not uncommon features of flats, and are considered to afford some amenity space to the units according with policy DM10. The proposed perforated metal balustrade, which allows light to penetrate, but obscures views, are considered to minimise the overall visibility into the units including from passing buses. However, the applicant has been asked to present further options, with regard to size and materials, which will be provided in an update report.
- 6.47 The proposed room sizes and overall flat dimensions would meet, and for some units exceed, the National Space Standards (DCLG).

(vi) Transport Issues

- 6.48 During the course of the previous 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 (171087).
- 6.49 Transport has confirmed, as detailed in the consultation section that, with regard to transport, the scheme is acceptable, subject to a number of conditions as included above. The proposed parking scheme at Oxford Road provides for:
- 7 dedicated spaces for the community hall/nursery; and
 - 4 residential spaces (to serve the three bed units)

- 6.50 This combined with 7 no. residential spaces at Wilson Road Site is considered acceptable and would satisfy the requirements of Policy CS24, and DM12.

(vii) Environmental Matters

- 6.51 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 acceptable by the Environmental Protection and Nuisance Officer.
- 6.52 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.

6.53 To assess if the site is contaminated a phase 1 assessment has been submitted which concludes that a phase 2 assessment is necessary. Conditions are recommended to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination.

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

(viii) Sustainability

6.55 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.

6.56 The applicant has submitted a BREEAM pre-assessment report demonstrating that community provision could meet BREEAM score of 65.64% (Very Good), which accords with Policy CS1.

6.57 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 23%.

(ix) Section 106

6.58 The proposed affordable housing provision is three of the 10 units, which would be policy compliant with DM6, i.e. 30% of the units.

6.59 Affordable housing policy seeks that the affordable housing mix should reflect the overall mix of the scheme. The affordable units are proposed to be one x1 bed, one x2 bed and one x3 bed. RBC's Housing Strategy Team has confirmed that the proposed size of the affordable units would be consistent with the overall size of units across the scheme.

6.60 The previous scheme included for 100% of the units to be shared ownership and the applicant was advised that the units should include for some affordable rent. The proposed scheme includes for two of the three units to be affordable rent, which Housing Strategy has confirmed is acceptable.

6.61 It is recommended that the S106 include the cascade mechanism, which allows for a default affordable housing financial contribution should a registered provider not take up the proposed units within the scheme.

6.62 The applicant is expected to make contributions in line with the requirements of policy CS9, DM3 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD. The applicant has confirmed a contribution towards Construction Skills of £2,295 in accordance with the calculation in the SPD.

(x) Equality

6.63 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.

- 6.64 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 would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application.
- 6.65 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 The reasons for refusal of the previous scheme (171086) are considered to have been overcome. The scheme is considered to be a high quality design with positive benefits which outweigh the loss of the undesignated heritage asset. Subject to conditions and informatives, recommended above, it is considered to accord with relevant policies.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

APPENDIX 1: CIVIC SOCIETY CONSULTATION RESPONSE & AGENT'S RESPONSE



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

as from: 69 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY

28 October 2018

Ms A Amoah
Planning Department
Reading Borough Council
Civic Centre
Bridge Street
READING
RG1 2LU

Dear Ms Amoah

Re: **Planning Application 181555 – Grovelands Baptist Church, Oxford Road, RG30 1HJ**

We wish to object to this application on the following grounds:

- a) the loss of a good Arts and Crafts building, with historic significance to the area, which contributes a great deal to the streetscape of Oxford Road,
- b) the replacement of a local church and community space by a block of flats with a smaller community space,
- c) replacement with a building which, while more sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area than the previous application 171086, still has major design faults,
- d) sustainability – demolition and replacement rather than re-purposing and re-using an existing building.

Loss of existing church building, a heritage asset

English Heritage's assessment of this building (03.12.09) was very complimentary:

“The former Grovelands Chapel is a handsome and well-composed building, the work of a leading local architect who used the emerging vocabulary of Arts and Crafts and Free Classical motifs with assurance and flair. The squat tower, which even with its eccentric cupola is still considerably lower than the main roof-ridge, gives a firm emphasis to the corner site whilst suggesting an unpretentious homeliness appropriate to the informality of Baptist churchmanship.”

“The quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context, *[my underlining]* but the interior is now much too altered to be of special interest at national level.”

In other words this building would have been listed if not for the loss of the internal features.

Grovelands Baptist Church is built of red/brown brick with a steep, red-tiled gabled roof, with varied fenestration including two arrangements of windows which give the impression of 'Venetian'-style windows, also a low square tower with a cupola. The building fits into its context of late-Victorian and Edwardian neighbours and enhances the streetscape without unduly dominating the surrounding houses.

READING CIVIC SOCIETY

2

28 October 2018

Ms A Amoah

The planning officer's recommendation for the refusal of a previous application to demolish and replace this building (111475, PAC Meeting 12.10.11) emphasises in Clauses 6.14 to 6.22 that **the chapel is an undesignated Heritage asset worthy of retention and that it has a landmark quality.**

The historic significance arises from the chapel (1899) being part of the early development of the western end of Oxford Road, emerging from a mission hall (1879) built by the brothers AW and MJ Sutton to serve Brock Barracks (1877). A daughter of E P Collier was married in the church and, thus, it has connections both to the Suttons Seeds family and to the local Colliers brickworks.

It is also worth mentioning that there are not many buildings in this Arts and Crafts style in Reading, compared to our Georgian and Victorian legacy, and to lose such a significant example would be a disaster in heritage terms.

Loss of community space

A previously permitted lapsed application 121716 to demolish the existing church building proposed, as a replacement, a purpose-built new church, with ancillary community uses, amounting to 1115m² of community space and only a very small proportion of residential provision, 213m², in addition. The *extended provision for community use* was seen at that time to outweigh the "harm done" resulting from the loss of the original heritage building.

The current application, 181555, no longer includes a new church on this site and significantly reduces the amount of community space to 350m², with the rest of the development being a block of 10 flats.

Following the reasoning for the previous permitted decision, this proposed development would not outweigh the "harm done" resulting from the loss of the original church building.

Proposed replacement building and design considerations

The proposed building, according to the images in the DAS, appears to be more in character with its neighbours than the previous refused design (171086) in that gables have been included on the front elevation and red brick has been used.

However, this corner site is very visible and the well-loved existing building is a landmark which sits comfortably in the streetscape with a lot of its merit lying in the well-designed proportionality of the building. This proposal would not attain the high quality of design required to replace it.

We would particularly note concerns with:

1) Bell-tower

It is a good idea to echo this feature of the existing building *but* the proposed corner tower is much bigger than the existing one which stops well below the roofline, and the proposed tower is a much more solid and over-dominant presence at the corner of Oxford Road and Wilson Road (DAS Rev A August 2018). It is also a good idea to include the existing **cupola** to the bell-tower *but*, again, the size of the proposed corner tower is a problem as it diminishes the cupola which was in proportion to the existing bell-tower but, in the proposed drawings, looks like a pimple on top.

READING CIVIC SOCIETY

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28 October 2018
Ms A Amoah

2) Balconies

There are several reasons why balconies are wrong in this context:

- a) they do not fit with the existing buildings in this part of Oxford Road, I can't think of any others in the vicinity;
- b) on the front elevation they are forward of the existing building line – a better solution if there are to be balconies would be for them to be inset rather than sticking out like open drawers;
- c) the top deck of the double-decker buses, which stop at the bus stop immediately in front of this building, would be on a level with the balconies on the first floor – not a very good prospect for the inhabitants;
- d) the front elevation is north facing, the cooler, darker side of the building, so not ideal for a balcony – might get away with them on the Wilson Road side for evening sun;
- e) noise and pollution from traffic and other sources on the busy Oxford Road would not encourage anyone to use these balconies as a place to sit.

On page 10 of the DAS, the applicants address privacy for the future residents of the proposed building and state that with reference to concerns raised at the public consultation event regarding privacy from passing buses, the living rooms/balconies have been designed with perforated metal balustrades which allow diffuse light to penetrate whilst obscuring views into living rooms. We would note that these rooms on the Oxford Road north elevation would not get much light anyway and to have it diffused through a metal screen would make them even darker. Are they fit for purpose?

Sustainability

It is a generally accepted principle that it is more beneficial to retain, refurbish and re-purpose buildings rather than demolish them and replace them with new buildings.

Bearing the above point in mind, we are still of the opinion that the existing building should not be demolished but should be refurbished and re-used.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular area that has been completely redacted with a solid black fill, obscuring the signature of the sender.

Richard Bennett
Chairman



C|P|L Chartered Architects

9 November 2018

Mr Richard Bennett
Reading Civic Society
69 Baker Street
Reading
RG1 7XY

Re: Proposed Redevelopment at Grovelands Chapel, 553 Oxford Road, planning application reference: 181555

Dear Mr Bennett,

I refer to your letter dated 28 October 2018 on behalf of Reading Civic Society regarding the above planning application.

Firstly, thank you for attending the public consultation event on 18 July '18 at Grovelands Chapel. The purpose of the event was to engage with local neighbours, councillors and interest groups, such as Reading Civic Society. Our discussions with you on the day were very constructive and we were pleased to record your comments which were subsequently used to help finalise the planning design. You kindly completed a feedback form setting out your comments and a copy is appended to this letter for ease of reference.

We therefore refer to your comments from the public consultation event as well as the points raised in your letter of 28th October.

1. Reading Civic Society Comments from Public Consultation Event dated 18 July 2018

1.1 *'Materials and scale are now more in keeping with the streetscape of Oxford Road and the area generally. Significant Improvement over previous design'*

We have finalised the design on the basis of your favoured design approach and we are pleased this meets with your approval.

1.2 *'We like the square tower – echo existing building and possibility of keeping the bell tower.'*

The planning application design includes the square tower and the refurbished and re-used bell tower as suggested and we are pleased this meets with your approval.

1.3. *'Re the gables we have a preference for Option 3 in full rather than the mix of Option 2 (Ox. Rd) and 3. It echoes the original whilst avoiding pastiche.'*

The planning application design has been finalised on the basis of your favoured design approach.

1.4 *'Demonstrate in the planning application why the building has to be demolished'*



C|P|L

Chartered Architects, Property Consultants & Designers

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Justification for demolition has been clearly set out in the submitted Heritage Statement, Design and Access and Planning Statements as requested. I have summarised the justification for demolition in my Conclusion below.

1.5 'Large windows at first floor level on Oxford Road – view in from top floor of buses'

Perforated metal balustrades (in lieu of glass previously proposed) were added to the design to meet this point. Regardless, the matter raised is common for many residential properties in urban areas and future residents have means to control privacy, i.e. blinds. The scheme does not differ from existing housing in the vicinity in this regard.

1.6 'Think about doing something clever with the stained glass'

We have given this some careful thought, however, though the existing stain glass window does not offer the thermal or acoustic performance required to meet the planning policy requirements for sustainability and avoidance of noise disturbance we would accept a planning condition stipulating the reuse of the stain glass window internally.

2. Reading Civic Society Comments of Letter dated 28 October 2018

You have now objected on the following grounds:

2.1 'the loss of a good Arts and Crafts building, with historic significance to the area, which contributes a great deal to the streetscape of Oxford Road'

Please refer to the submitted Heritage, Planning and Design and Access Statements which demonstrate why the loss of the building is justified.

2.2 'the replacement of a local church and community space by a block of flats with a smaller community space'

- The amount of new community space is equal to the amount of existing community space.
- The quality of the new community space will be far superior to the existing space in terms of accessibility, flexibility, natural light and energy efficiency.
- The flats provide much needed residential accommodation to help meet Reading's housing needs.
- The residential accommodation is required to cross-subsidise the community element. The provision of the community space is not financially viable without the residential development. (You will appreciate that the applicant is a charity)
- The proposals will provide valuable family dwellings and affordable housing.
- The church no longer uses Grovelands Chapel as a place of worship. It holds its Sunday services at 384 The Meadway; hence the previous planning approval featuring a larger amount of community space is no longer appropriate or financially viable. The Meadway site is to be redeveloped and this redevelopment will provide an overall nett gain in community space in West Reading. The redevelopment at the Meadway is not financially viable without planning approval for the proposed scheme at Grovelands Chapel.



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2.3 'replacement with a building which, while more sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area than the previous application 171086, still has major design faults'

We understand that by 'design faults' you refer to the appearance of the bell tower and balconies upon which you have previously commented favourably in the consultation exercise. Views on the architectural design and appearance of new proposals tend to be somewhat subjective in nature and comment has been obtained from Reading Borough Council's Design Review Panel which is comprised of a team of Architects to provide peer review of design quality and aesthetic matters. The designs have been presented several times to the design review panel, the planning officer and at the public consultation event and the current design takes on board comments resulting from the extensive engagement carried out. However:

- The prominence of the cupola is a technical detail. It can be made more visible by raising the roof level of the tower without adjusting the height of the tower parapet. We agree this would be beneficial and have updated the design to suit.
- Balconies provide the benefit of outdoor amenity, which is still a benefit even for north facing aspect.
- Balconies are an accepted feature of most modern residential designs and are considered appropriate even in areas far more urban than Oxford Road.
- There are several examples of flat blocks along Oxford Road and nearby that feature balconies, including facing Oxford Road. (Examples are appended to this letter for ease of reference.)
- You suggest 'a better solution if there are to be balconies would be for them to be inset' yet you also raise concern over natural light. Inset balconies would reduce daylight levels.
- Outdoor amenity space for modern housing is strongly encouraged in planning policy and is generally considered to be good practice.

2.4 'Sustainability: It is a generally accepted principle that it is more beneficial to retain, refurbish and re-purpose buildings rather than demolish them and replace them with new buildings.'

Retention of the existing building is unfortunately not feasible for the reasons outlined in the application. A new building will also be more energy efficient, a point reiterated by the specialist sustainability consultants employed by the church. Sustainability is also fundamentally linked to efficient use of prime brownfield urban sites with good transport links. New build provides a far more efficient means of developing the site sustainably and creating a good level of residential density.

3. Conclusion

It is acknowledged that the chapel has some architectural merit externally. This is noted in the assessment by English Heritage appended to the Heritage Statement. CPL Chartered Architects has a national reputation for ecclesiastical architectural projects and we have spent 25 years conserving and enhancing Listed church buildings and heritage assets. However, heritage considerations must be balanced with other planning considerations, a point emphasised clearly on page 5 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which cites economic and social objectives alongside environmental objectives. Furthermore, the prevailing undercurrent of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is that of sustainable development. The NPPF states that;

3



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'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.' (NPPF paragraph 11)

The key facts relating to this planning application may be summarised as follows:

1. Grovelands Chapel is in a poor state of repair and suffers from several significant building fabric issues. The Church has been unable to offer the building for community use (besides church use) for several years due to its poor state and cost of repairs.
2. The cost to refurbish the building has been investigated, is prohibitively expensive and would not result in the flexible, light and environmentally sustainable spaces that will be offered by the proposed new community space.
3. The applicant has consulted widely on the proposals and prepared a revised design to take into account the responses received, including those of the Reading Civic Society.
4. In order to provide the new community space at Oxford Road, ten on site residential units are required to cross subsidise the community element and to avoid the building falling into a further state of disrepair.
5. The proposals retain an equal amount of community space, but of higher community benefit, compared to the existing building. The new community space will be light, airy, accessible, flexible and energy efficient.
6. The proposals provide new much needed family housing and affordable housing.
7. The proposals provide a new nursery and cafe space for the local community.
8. The proposals mitigate issues on site relating to antisocial behaviour and vandalism.
9. The proposals help fund valuable new community facilities at the Church's other site at The Meadway thus resulting in a significant nett gain of community space in West Reading.
10. The design of the new building responds positively to its context, makes reference to the key architectural features of the existing chapel and has been judged by Reading Borough Council in pre-application correspondence to be of an acceptable appearance, scale, mass, layout and design quality.

It is therefore concluded that the benefits of the proposed redevelopment and the quality of the design outweigh the loss of the heritage asset.

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Almond
BArch (Hons), MArch, PGDip (MPL Arch), ARB

cc Cllr Tony Page
Ms Alison Amoah
Mrs Maureen Atkins (The Gate)



CIPIL

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Examples of nearby residential buildings with balconies facing the main road and large living room windows on bus routes (copyright google)



Oxford Road flats 500m west of Grovelands Chapel featuring large first floor windows and Juliet balconies facing Oxford Road



Oxford Road flats 850m west of Grovelands Chapel featuring balconies on Oxford Road



Curzon Street/Battle Square residential development 200m east of Grovelands Chapel featuring large balconies and windows facing the main road



PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENT - FEEDBACK FORM

REDEVELOPMENT OF GROVELANDS CHAPEL, OXFORD RD, READING. July 2018

Think about doing something clever with the stained glass

1.	Do you have any comments on the proposals? Please write any comments here 1. Materials + scale are now more in keeping with street scape of Oxford Rd + the area generally. Significant improvement over previous design. 2. Parking problems in Wilso Rd appear to have been resolved with RBC.	YES/NO
2.	Are there any aspects of the design you think should be addressed? Please write any comments here • We like the square tower - echo existing building + possibility of keeping the bell tower • Re the gables, we have a preference for option 3 in full rather than the mix of option 2 (Ox. Rd) + 3 - it echoes the original whilst avoiding pastiche.	YES/NO
3.	Do you think any issues may arise from the proposals? Please write any comments here 1) Demands made in the planning application why the building has to be demolished. 2) Large windows at first floor level? on Oxford Road - view in from top floor of bus. etc.	YES/NO
4.	Contact Details (optional) Name & Address: Richard + Alisa Bennell Reading Core Society Telephone/Email: [REDACTED]	

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALONG TODAY

APPENDIX 2: PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

Oxford Road - 171086



20/07/18 REV 0 Updated design / new planning application
 21/11/17 REV A Updated following DA comments

date	project name	project number	drawing number
21/11/17	553 OXFORD ROAD READING MIXED USED DEVELOPMENT	RCC.17	/101B
scale	drawing title		
1:500	SITE BLOCK PLAN		
drawn			
DA			

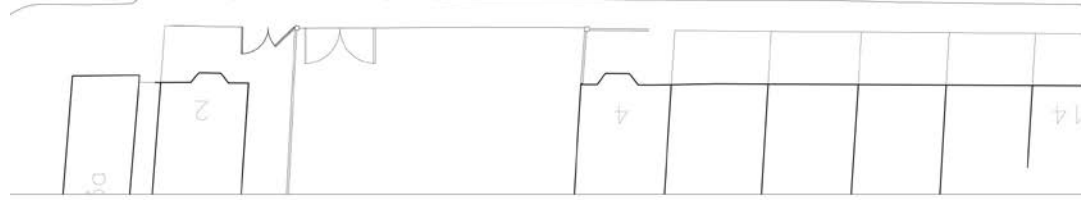


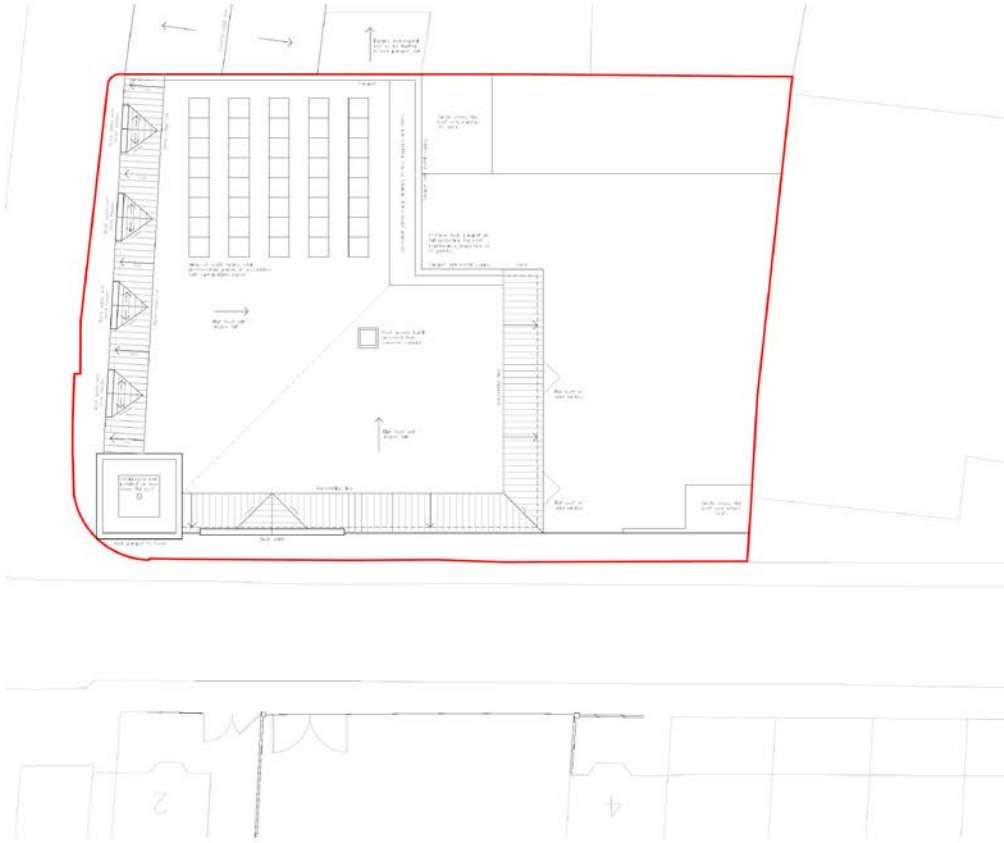
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COMMUNITY & RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
 553 OXFORD ROAD READING

GROUND FLOOR PLAN AS PROPOSED

date	scale
JUNE 2017	1:100
drawn	checked
DA	PW
project number	drawing number
RCC.17	/150





Approved: 19th July 2017
 Date: 19th July 2017
 Scale: 1/100



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COMMUNITY & RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
553 OXFORD ROAD
READING

Drawing No:
ROOF PLAN
AS PROPOSED

	DATE	SCALE
	JUNE 2017	1:100
	DATE	SCALE
DA	PW	

Drawing No: **RCC.17 /154** Drawing Code: **B**

APPENDIX 3: LOCAL LISTING LETTER (sent via email)



The Baptist Union Corporation Ltd
PO Box 44
129 Broadway
Didcot
Oxfordshire
OX11 8RT

Your contact is: Alison Amoah, Planning

Giorgio Framalitto
Head of Planning, Development
& Regulatory Services

Civic Offices, Reading, RG1 2LU

☎ 0118 937 3787

Our Ref: Grovelands Church LL

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 2286

e-mail: Alison.amoah@reading.gov.uk

23rd November 2018

Dear Ms Sanderson,

NOTIFICATION THAT GROVELANDS CHURCH AT 553 OXFORD ROAD, READING, RG30 1HJ HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE LIST OF LOCALLY IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF LOCAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

I write to formally notify you, as the owner of the building, that Grovelands Church has been added to Reading Borough's List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures in recognition of its local heritage significance. This follows a request from the Reading Civic Society.

This building meets the adopted criteria for adding buildings or structures to the list of buildings or structures with local heritage significance as set out in the Council's Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015).

In summary Grovelands Chapel:

- Has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person (s) or event.
- Has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities.
- Has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials
- Is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.
- Shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.
- Has prominence and landmark quality that is fundamental to the sense of place of the locality.

Reasoning

Historic Interest

Historical Association

The Architect, William Roland Howell, was a prominent figure in borough and county life, serving on Reading Council from 1911 to 1930 (including a stint as

Mayor between 1921 and 1922), as Chairman of the Berkshire Society of Architects from 1922, and as Superintendent of Works for Berkshire from 1924.

The founders of the 1879 mission hall were Arthur Warwick (1854 -1925) and Martin John Sutton (Arthur Warwick), partners in Reading firm Suttons Seeds. William Lansbury and John Lawson Forfeitt were both Suttons employees who became Baptist missionaries in the Congo. In 1893 W L Forfeitt married Anne Maria Collier, daughter of Samuel J Collier.

Collier's brickworks moved to Grovelands from Coley in 1870. It is more than possible that the bricks for Grovelands chapel came from Collier's Grovelands brickworks.

The builders were Collier & Catley.

Social Importance

The development of the western end of Reading's Oxford Road began in 1877 with the construction of the Brock Barracks, one of a large number of new military 'depots' established under the provisions of the Registration of the Forces Act of 1871, which aimed to encourage infantry recruitment by allowing soldiers to serve in their own county regiment rather than being drafted further afield. There was at that time no church in the area, and in 1879 two Anglican laymen, the brothers Arthur Warwick and Martin John Sutton, founded a mission hall in Grovelands Road East (now Wilson Road) as a place of worship and virtuous recreation for the soldiers. A few years later this operation was taken over by Reading's long-established Baptist community.

Over the next two decades the area between the barracks and the town centre was developed for housing, mainly modest working-class terraces in a grid of small streets on either side of Oxford Road. By the end of the century the original corrugated-iron mission hall became hopelessly inadequate for the district's vastly expanded population, and funds were raised by Reading's five Baptist congregations, as well as among the other Christian denominations, for a permanent building. In 1896 a plot of land was acquired across the street from the old site, and designs obtained from the architect WR Howell, a partner in the Reading-based firm of Cooper and Howell, for a new chapel to seat 450 worshippers. In March 1899 AW Sutton laid the foundation stone, and the chapel opened in October of the same year, having cost around £2,700 to build. Its fittings included an open tiled baptistery, a central feature of Baptist worship.

A three day bazaar was held at the Town Hall from Tuesday 24 October 1899 onwards, to raise money to reduce the debt on the chapel.

The building, now known as the Reading Community Church (now The Gate), has remained in religious use ever since.

Architectural Interest

Innovation and Virtuosity

The site comprises two buildings: the main chapel of 1899 at the corner of Oxford Road and Wilson Road, and a smaller hall to the south, probably built as a Sunday school. The building itself is of red brown brick with terracotta dressings in an Arts and Crafts-influenced Free Renaissance style, and tiled roofs.

A steep gabled roof of red tile covers the main worship space. The east gable end adjoins a neighbouring house, while on the exposed west gable, above a range of four small two-light windows, is a 'Venetian window' motif composed of a three-light mullion-and-transom window flanked by single transomed lights and surmounted by a blind semi-circular tympanum with a moulded keystone.

A projecting transept-like wing on the north front displays a similar motif, this time comprising three cross-windows beneath an egg-and-dart cornice, above which is a semi-circular window resembling a fanlight. Also on this elevation is the round-arched entrance porch, with battered upper walls and a swept parapet, within which a datestone records the foundation of the new church in 1899. To the right of this is a low square tower, its upper stage similar to that of the porch but topped by a lead-covered timber cupola.

The smaller hall, to the rear of the main building, is a simple rectangular building, built like the church of red brick with a steep tiled roof, with two segment-headed doorways and four-light timber casement windows with glazing bars. The single-cell interior, now stripped down and modern, contains no features of note.

The high quality exterior of the former chapel is a stark contrast to the interior, where almost all original features have been removed by the church. In consequence the building was not accepted by Historic England (English Heritage as was) as being of national importance, but of "local interest for its pleasing architectural quality" and "the quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it considerable significance in the Reading context". An extract of their assessment from 2009 is as follows:

"The former Grovelands Chapel is a handsome and well-composed building, the work of a leading local architect who used the emerging vocabulary of Arts and Crafts and Free Classical motifs with assurance and flair. Repeated motifs, such as the variants on the 'Venetian window' device in the north and west gables, or the battered pilasters and swept parapets that crown the north porch and tower, tie the design together and bring unity to its disparate elements. The squat tower, which even with its eccentric cupola is still considerably lower than the main roof-ridge, gives a firm emphasis to the corner site whilst suggesting an unpretentious homeliness appropriate to the informality of Baptist churchmanship.

The quality of the exterior is in stark contrast to the denuded state of the interior. Virtually all the original fittings - which would typically have included fixed pews, a communion table and a large central pulpit - have been removed, and the tiled baptistery mentioned in contemporary accounts has been either floored over or filled in completely. The arrangement of windows at the west end suggests that there may have been a gallery here; if so, this too has been removed, perhaps at the same time that the open roof was filled in with the present suspended ceiling, which transforms the proportions of the space and conceals the large gable windows. Aside from the latter and the internal lobby doors, the original stained glass has all been removed.

The simple, hall-like interiors of Nonconformist churches tend, much more than their Anglican equivalents, to rely for their interest on the completeness of their fixtures and fittings. Here, that interest has been almost completely lost. The quality of the chapel's exterior and the local standing of its architect give it

considerable significance in the Reading context, but the interior is now much too altered to be of special interest at national level."

The architect William Roland Howell (1867-1940) was born in Reading and lived and worked there for most of his life. By 1882 he was articled with the Reading practice of Cooper, Son and Millar; he received extra artistic training at the Reading School of Art (1882-1887). After becoming ARIBA in 1890 he went into partnership with the son of his former employer - John Omer Cooper, a prominent local Baptist. Between 1891-1905 Cooper and Howell became well known as one of the leading firms of architects in the district. He bought out his partner and setting up in independent practice in 1905. Its successor practice continued to trade as Howell Freeman and Batten until the 1980s.

He was responsible for a number of buildings in Reading, from his monumental Gothic Art Gallery and Library extension to the Town Hall (facing Valpy Street) 1897 and other municipal buildings of 1894-7 through to a faience-clad Art Nouveau shop-front of 1905 at 8 High Street (both listed at Grade II) which was Jacksons's former Boot Shop and is now used by Oxfam. He also designed numerous schools, factories, banks, hospital buildings, public houses and private houses in and around the town. William Roland Howell was a prominent figure in borough and county life, serving on Reading Council.

The building is in an Arts and Crafts Style, a period running from c 1880-1910. Other similarly influenced buildings in Reading, such as Caversham Library, are more flowing in style whereas Grovelands has an almost early Glasgow School feel to it. Reading Civic Society considers, to the best of their knowledge, that the building is unique in Reading. It is noted also that the windows do not have painted frames, the brick appears to come right to the glass, which seems an appropriately economic design.

Townscape Value

The building is a very prominent structure on Oxford Road and has considerable presence. The views from the West are particularly striking. The terracotta building with its marked bell tower, with the cupola, make a very distinctive and distinguished mark in this part of Reading surrounded as it is by modest terraced properties.

Conclusion/ Notes:

Based on evidence currently available, there is definite architectural significance with the church dating from 1840 - 1913 and being substantially complete and unaltered, excluding the interior. This significance is focussed on the exterior of the buildings.

The buildings are the work of a notable local architect showing virtuosity and innovation in the design technique and architectural style, noteworthy quality of workmanship, and materials. The main building has townscape value as a Landmark building.

The site has historical importance (significance) because of its historic associations with the important local architect, William Roland Howell as well as with Arthur Warwick and Martin John Sutton of Suttons Seeds.

The social importance (significance) has more to do with the site as a whole as the building has been influential in the life of one of Reading's communities as a place of worship and played a key social role.

Future development proposals should conserve the non-designated heritage asset in a manner appropriate to its significance (NPPF para 184).

Please find attached a general information sheet regarding the local listing of a building or structure. There is a period of six weeks beginning with the date of this letter during which you may notify the local planning authority of any reason why you believe the building should not have been locally listed.

Comments can be made in writing to me at the email or postal addresses above. Any comments received will be considered and you will be notified of any revision to the decision to locally list the building.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Amoah
Principal Planning Officer

Building/ structure identification:
Grid reference: E 469442 N 173700
Buildings within red line on plan below

Cc: Steve Hicks, RBC Valuation Section
Giorgio Framalico, RBC Head of Planning Development and Regulatory Services
Evelyn Williams, Reading Conservation Advisory Committee
Richard Bennet, Reading Civic Society
Norcot Ward Councillors, Reading