

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2015/2396/FULL
Location: Twelve Apostles Church, Kentish Lane, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, AL9 6JY
Proposal: Rebuilding of sections to existing wall on boundary to Woodfield Lane
Officer: Mrs J Pagdin

Recommendation: Granted

6/2015/2396/FULL

Context	
Site and Application description	<p>The application site comprises of a church and its car park. It is located on the northeast corner of the junction of Kentish Lane and Woodfield Lane. The site's access is from the junction and the double gated egress is 50m to the east along Woodfield Lane.</p> <p>The church is not a Listed Building but is a distinctive landmark, being built of red brick and stone with flint finishing to the walls and gothic-styled stone window surrounds. It is dated as Victorian. The roof is pitched and covered in plain tiles.</p> <p>The church is set back from the Woodfield Lane highway behind a gravel car park over 15m deep and 50m wide. The boundary is set back 2m from the carriageway of Woodfield Lane behind a grass and treed verge, along which there is no footway.</p> <p>The boundary wall is the subject of this application. It is currently around 1.3m high, built of flint and brick with brick coping and covered in ivy. Sections have collapsed. A close boarded fence has been erected to fill some of the gaps although other gaps have since developed, notably close to the entrance on the corner.</p> <p><u>Proposal</u></p> <p>Full planning permission is sought to replace the wall between the entrance and egress facing onto Woodfield Lane.</p> <p>This is a re-application following expiry of planning permission 6/2011/1617/FP.</p> <p>The proposed wall would be 1.1m high, built of brick with intermediate 1.25m high brick piers spaced at 4m intervals. The brick piers would have flint cross-shaped panels facing the road. The bricks would be red to match those of the existing church. Existing brick copings and flints would be salvaged and reused.</p> <p>The existing gates and their piers would remain.</p>

Constraints (as defined within WHDP 2005)	GB – Greenbelt – washed over. LCA - Landscape Character Area (North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau) PAR - PARISH (HATFIELD) WARD - BROOKMANS PARK AND LITTLE HEATH		
Relevant planning history	S6/2011/1617/FP – Rebuilding of existing boundary wall. Approved 22.9.2011. S6/2010/0134/FP – Replacement of fencing to boundary. Refused 31.3.2010. S6/2008/0819/FP – Installation of sewerage works. Approved 17.7.2008. S6/2006//0054/FP – Erection of single storey extension to Priest’s Office. Refused 13.3.2006. S6/2005/0306/FP – Retention of land to use as car parking. Approved 11.5.2005. S6/2001/1520/FP – Erection of outbuilding after demolition of existing shed. Approved 14.1.2002. S6/1999/0490/FP – Extension to form kitchen and toilets. Approved 22.10.1999. S6/1998/0917/FP – Extension to existing church. Approved 11.12.1998. S6/1998/0419/FP – Change of use from residential training centre to church use and construction of 27 car parking spaces. Approved 28.8.1998.		
Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support:	Object:	Other:
Publicity	Site Notice Display Date: 12 February 2016 Site Notice Expiry Date: 4 March 2016 Neighbouring properties were notified in writing.		
Summary of neighbour responses	None.		
Hatfield Town Council representations	None received.		
Consultees and responses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul Widdicombe (see above HTC) 2. Councillor Stephen Boulton - no response 3. Councillor Irene Dean - no response 4. Councillor John Dean - no response 5. Landscape Department – no objection subject to condition protecting roots and canopies of trees on grass verge. 6. Conservation Officer – commented that a brick wall may appear formal against the flint wall of the church. Additional condition regarding use of lime mortar recommended. Advisory note regarding removal of ivy infestation recommended. 		
Relevant Policies			
NPPF 2012 (National Planning Policy Framework) D1 D2 GBSP1 GBSP2 M14			

Others

Main Issues

Impact on Green Belt

The site is located within the Green Belt, as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. Paragraphs 79-87 of the NPPF indicate that the most important attribute of the Green Belt is its openness and that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The construction of new buildings in the Green belt is inappropriate and should only be approved in very special circumstances or subject to certain exceptions. The NPPF does not specifically mention boundary treatments, however, being of solid construction and of substantial length (50m) the wall can be considered to be a building.

In previous planning applications PPG2 was the extant Policy Document and it was considered that very special circumstances outweighed any harm to the openness of the Green Belt. These circumstances were that the wall was in poor condition and represented a health and safety issue, being adjacent to the highway (if not a footway), that some materials from the old wall could be salvaged and reused and that the design for the wall was a significant improvement on previous proposals. Approval for a similar proposal to the current one was granted in 2011.

However, as there is a boundary wall at present, the proposal in the current application can be considered to be a replacement wall. Paragraph 89 of NPPF 2012 advises that buildings that are replacements in the same use and not materially larger than the one they replace can be considered as appropriate exceptions.

The proposed wall would be 1.1m high with 1.25m high piers. This would be lower than the height of the existing wall where it has not collapsed, which is 1.3m. The design of the wall, while presenting a harder image than the existing ivy-clad wall would be set back 2m from the highway behind the grass verge and the trees growing therein. Given the slight reduction in height and set-back from the roadway, the proposed wall would not be materially larger than the one it replaces and would qualify as an appropriate replacement. In addition it would not adversely impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. It is, therefore, considered to be acceptable in terms of NPPF Green Belt Policies.

Design (form, size, scale, siting) and Character (appearance within the streetscene)

Policies D1, D2 and RA10 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 require the proposal to relate to its immediate context and surrounding area.

The current proposal is considered to be acceptable in this respect for it would use materials already on the site and which are used in the construction of the main church building and the overall scale and detailing of the wall is similar to, but slightly lower than the current one. The flint infill panels and copings would reuse salvaged materials and are of particular note, replicating the existing pattern on the gate piers at the main vehicle entrance. The appearance of the replacement wall would be in keeping with the appearance and character of the church. The height of the wall would not result in it being unduly prominent in the wider setting of country lanes and rural properties.

The proposal is, therefore, considered acceptable in terms of the above Policies.

Heritage Considerations

The building is not Listed but is a non-designated historic asset. The Conservation Officer has recommended the use of a lime mortar to prevent spalling of the soft red bricks and bulging of flintwork, which can occur with cement mortar. This can be included as a condition on any planning decision to help extend the life of the wall. An informative can be added regarding

	removing the ivy infestation for the same purpose.
Impact on neighbours	The nearest neighbours are across the road at Woodfield, a residential property. The low wall would not have a direct effect upon the living conditions at that property.
Access, car parking and highway considerations	The Highways Authority previously had no objection to the proposal but requested an informative advising the applicant to contact the Highway Authority with regard to work adjacent to the highway.
Landscaping Issues	The Landscape Department previously requested that any new trenches were dug by hand and no materials stored or tools washed beneath the canopies of trees on the verge. A condition to this effect was imposed on planning permission S6/2011/1617/FP. The Landscape department have recommended that the same conditions should be applied to this application. A similar condition shall be applied to the current application.
Conclusion	
The proposal is considered to be an appropriate replacement for the existing wall in terms of Green Belt Policy and the appearance and character of the church and the rural setting and to have no adverse impact on the living conditions at neighbouring properties. Therefore, subject to conditions over tree protection, re-use of materials/use of new materials to match, and use of lime mortar the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to the policies of the NPPF 2012, the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance 2005.	

Conditions:

1. The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

Location Plan @ Scale 1:1250 & Block Plan @ 1:500 & SK/01A & SK/02A and Photographs Sheet 1 and 2 received and dated 26.11.2015.

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.
2. The brickworks, flints, bond, mortar and detailing of the approved wall and piers shall match those of the existing church. Brick copings and flints from the existing wall to be replaced shall be salvaged and re-used and if any additional copings and flints are required these are to be matching in appearance.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity of the Green Belt and surrounding area in accordance with Policies GBSP1, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
3. No tree or shrub on the adjacent highway verge on Woodfield Lane shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any such tree or shrub be pruned. Any topping or lopping shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 (Tree Work).

If any retained tree or shrub is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another

tree or shrub shall be planted at the same place and that tree or shrub shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time, as may be specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Any trenches that are dug for the new wall and piers close to the existing trees on the adjacent highway verge shall be hand dug to prevent mechanical damage to the roots.

No equipment, machinery or materials shall be stored or placed in any area under the canopies of these trees and no tools shall be washed under the canopies of these trees. No fires shall be lit within 20 metres of the retained trees and shrubs.

In this condition, retained tree or shrub, means an existing tree or shrub, as the case may be, which is within the site or on land adjacent to the boundary to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars; and the paragraphs above shall have effect until the expiration of five years from the date of the commencement of the development hereby approved.

REASON: To protect the existing trees, shrubs and hedgerows in the interest of visual amenity in accordance with Policy D8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

4. The brick wall sections hereby permitted must be constructed with a lime based mortar and, subsequently, shall be retained in that condition.

REASON: To ensure the historic and architectural character and setting of the building is properly maintained, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

1. REASON FOR APPROVAL

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).

Informatives:

1. Any damage to the grass verges caused by the development/works hereby approved is the responsibility of the applicant and must be re-instated to their original condition, within one month of the completion of the development/works. If damage to the verges are not repaired then the Council and/or Highway Authority will take appropriate enforcement action to remedy any harm caused.
2. The applicant is advised to contact the Highways Authority (Hertfordshire County Council Transportation Strategy and Policy) with regard to works adjacent to the highway.
3. You are advised that all traces of ivy infestation should be removed prior to rebuilding of the wall sections.

Determined By:

Mr A Mangham
24 March 2016