

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLANNING, PUBLIC PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2022/1028/FULL
Location: United Reformed Church Church Road Welwyn Garden City AL8
 6PR
Proposal: Construction of a single storey rear extension to the Church following the demolition of an existing 1980s extension and the alteration to 1no. existing window.
Officer: Mrs Sarah Madyausiku

Recommendation: Granted

6/2022/1028/FULL

Context			
Site and Application description	<p>The United Reform Church has a distinctive style that is complemented by its spacious setting. The site is predominantly a large open site with the church along its northern boundary and the manse dwelling in its south- western corner.</p> <p>Adjacent to the building to the east is an existing car park accessed off of Church Road. The site is located within the Conservation Area. The building is not listed.</p> <p>Planning permission is sought for a single storey rear extension to allow for additional community church space.</p>		
Constraints (as defined within WHDP 2005)	<p>CA - Conservation Area: WGC1; - Distance: 0</p> <p>AAS - Area of Archaeological Significance Area of Archaeological Significance : AAS26 - Distance: 0</p> <p>Town - Welwyn Garden City Town Centre - Distance: 0</p> <p>Wards - Handside - Distance: 0</p> <p>HEN - No known habitats present (medium priority for habitat creation) - Distance: 0</p> <p>SAGB - Sand and Gravel Belt - Distance: 0</p>		
Relevant planning history	None		
Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support: 4	Object: 3	Other: 0
Publicity	Site Notice Display Date: 25 May 2022		

	<p>Site Notice Expiry Date: 17 June 2022</p> <p>Press Advert Display Date: 25 May 2022</p> <p>Press Advert Expiry Date: 17 June 2022</p>
Summary of neighbour responses	<p>Objections from the following: 24, 26 and 50 Parkfields. Summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Uncharacteristic design. -Light pollution. -The extension seems more for social use than one specifically designed for church and prayer use. -Noise disturbance. -Parking issues with the increased use.
Consultees and responses	<p>No comments or objections from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hertfordshire County Council - Historic Environment Advisor -Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies - Case Officer -Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - Landscapes Department -Hertfordshire County Council - Hertfordshire Transport Programmes & Strategy
Relevant Policies	
<p>Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (Saved Local Plan):</p> <p>SD1 – Sustainable Development</p> <p>GBSP2 – Towns and Specified Settlements</p> <p>M14 – Parking Standards for new Development</p> <p>D1 – Quality of Design</p> <p>D2 – Character and Context</p> <p>D8 – Landscaping</p> <p>R29 – Archaeology</p> <p>CLT14 Places of Worship</p> <p><i>Supplementary guidance/documents:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 - Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards 2004 - Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes 2014 (Interim Parking Policy) <p>Policy SP9 and SADM15 of the emerging Local Plan</p>	
Main Issues	
Is the development within a conservation area?	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The site is located within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.</p>	
Would the significance of the designated heritage asset be preserved or enhanced?	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Comment (if applicable): The development is located within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area. It should be noted that Section 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas Act (1990) states that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or the appearance of that area’. Section 16 of the NPPF ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ is broadly consistent with Policy SADM15 ‘Heritage’ of the Emerging Local Plan. Policies D1, D2 and the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Supplementary Design</p>	

Guidance (SDG) supplement this, along with Policies SP1 and SP9 of the Council's Emerging Local Plan 2016.

The Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area Appraisal states '*The planned concentration and variety in the design of these buildings [the churches] creates a distinctive architectural and townscape statement close to the Town Centre*'. The United Reform Church '*sits comfortably within a spacious plot among mature trees*', though its car park '*lacking any attempt to mitigate the impact of hardware, harsh lighting and poor paving, renders this stretch more visually alienating*'. The site is located fairly centrally within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area though is reasonably well screened by the trees along the boundaries of the site with both Parkway and Church Road.

District Plan Policy CLT 14 - Places of Worship – is relevant. It says "The provision of new or extensions to existing places of worship will be granted planning permission where it can be demonstrated that the use and choice of location will only serve a local community and the site would be easily accessible by a range of transport options. In addition, proposals should: (i) Make adequate provision for car parking and have no adverse impact on the highway network including highway safety; (ii) Have no harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses; and (iii) Not detract from the visual amenity of the area.

Criterion (iii) of the Policy CLT14 says that new extensions should "Not detract from the visual amenity of the area".

The proposal would involve the erection of a single storey extension to the rear of the church. It would include a brick structure, with an external seating area with a canopy roof. This flat roofed canopy element would have a green roof and solar panels. Level access would be provided at the eastern side via a ramped area.

Objections are raised from local residents that the proposal is uncharacteristic in its design and the use of the building as part of the church is questioned.

The extension would be a sizable addition to the building. However, its single storey design with flat roof would mitigate it from appearing unduly dominant. Its design is more contemporary than that of the main church which eschews the Georgian revival/arts and crafts influences. Nonetheless, its lightweight architectural form and glazing would complement the main building rather than detract from it. A condition is recommended with regard to materials, to ensure that they complement the main church building and surroundings.

The applicants have shown the evidence that the Church use does, and is likely to continue to offer a range of benefits to the existing local community and are needed. This is supported by Policy CLT14.

Overall, the impact upon the character and appearance of the building and the Conservation Area would therefore be acceptable, in compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies D1, D2 and CLT14 of the District Plan and Policy SP9 and SADM15 of the emerging Local Plan. The proposal would also comply with the provisions of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in preserving the Conservation Area.

Would the development maintain the amenity of adjoining occupiers? (e.g. privacy, outlook, light etc.)

Yes No N/A

Comment (if applicable):

Policy D1 and the Supplementary Design Guidance aim to preserve neighbouring amenity. The impact of the proposed development on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties is considered in terms of impact on day, sun, and sky light; privacy and over dominance.

Criterion (ii) of the Policy CLT14 says that new extensions should “Have no harmful impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties and other uses”.

Objections are raised from local residents that the proposal might result in light pollution and noise disturbance. The Church already has an established use to provide community services. The continued use of the site in the same manner is not considered likely to have a significant impact upon neighbouring living conditions or amenity. Whilst some light may come from the building, its single storey nature and its separation distance from adjacent dwellings would prevent any light spillage from causing significant harm to their living conditions. The proposal is therefore supported by District Plan Policies D1 and CLT14.

Would the development safeguard Highways and parking?

Yes No N/A

Criterion (i) of the Policy CLT14 requires that ‘adequate provision is made for car parking and the use should have no adverse impact on the highway network including highway safety’. Policy M14 ‘Parking Standards for New Development’, states that ‘The council will require parking provision for new development to be made in accordance with the standards set out in the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance on parking’.

The site is within a major town centre which provides easy access to public transport and benefits from an extensive network of cycleways and footways.

The proposal does not take away any space currently used for parking. The site benefits from an existing car parking area to the side which would be adequate in serving the property. The Highway Authority have been consulted on the application and rise no objections. The proposal would not impact on highway safety.

Archaeology

The site is situated within Area of Archaeological Significance, as identified in the Local Plan. The Historic Environment team have been consulted and present no comments on the proposal.

Conclusion

Having regard to all of the above, subject to a condition requiring submission of materials, the proposed development is acceptable in terms of its impact upon the existing building, the street scene and neighbour amenity. It would also preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with the requirements of S72 of the planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Its location, in the Town Centre of Welwyn Garden City, means that the proposed development would also have community benefits arising. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Conditions:

1. No development above ground level in any phase of the development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby granted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented using the approved materials and subsequently, the approved materials shall not be changed.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

DRAWING NUMBERS

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

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
776 140 P1		Proposed Elevations	3 May 2022
776 122 P1		Proposed First Floor Plan	3 May 2022
776 120 P1		Proposed Site Location Plan	3 May 2022
776 100 P1		Site Location Plan	3 May 2022
776 101 P1		Existing Site Plan	3 May 2022
776 102 P1		Proposed Site Plan	3 May 2022
776 151 P1		Existing Section Bb	3 May 2022
776 160 P1		Proposed Section Aa	3 May 2022
776 161 P1		Proposed Section Bb	3 May 2022
776 123 P1		Proposed Roof Plan	3 May 2022
776 130 P1		Existing Demolition Elevation	3 May 2022
776 150 P1		Existing Section Aa	3 May 2022
776 110 P1		Existing Demolition Gf Plan	3 May 2022
776 111 P1		Existing Demolition 1st Plan	3 May 2022
776 112 P1		Existing Demolition Roof Plan	3 May 2022
776 142 P1		Proposed South Elevation	3 May 2022
776 170 P1		Proposed Landscape	3 May 2022
776 143 P1		Proposed West Elevation	3 May 2022
776 141 P1		Proposed East Elevation	3 May 2022
776 121 P1		Proposed Ground Floor Plan	3 May 2022

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

1. POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraph 38 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. This permission does not convey any consent which may be required under any legislation other than the Town and Country Planning Acts. Any permission required under the Building Regulations or under any other Act, must be obtained from the relevant authority or body e.g. Fire Officer, Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency (water interest etc.) Neither does this permission negate or override any private covenants or legal interest (easements or wayleaves) which may affect the land.
2. In addition, and separate to your planning permission, for the majority of schemes, you are required by law to appoint a building regulator who will inspect your property at various stages during the course of your building project. This is to ensure it is compliant with the Building Regulations and the Building Act 1984.

The checks the building regulator will carry out include, but are not limited to, the structure, foundations, fire precautions and escape routes, electrical and plumbing compliance and other issues such as drainage and insulation. The objective of these checks is to ensure that your building is safe to live in, accessible and environmentally sustainable.

Once all build stages are checked and the works are finished, a Completion Certificate is issued confirming that these objectives have been met. You will also need the Completion Certificate, should you sell the property, as it will confirm to future owners that the work has been carried out in compliance with the Regulations.

As the owner of the property, you are responsible for Building Regulations compliance so we would urge you to decide which regulator to use, as opposed to leaving your builder or architect to make the choice. This is so that you can be sure the building regulator is truly independent and working to protect you from any breach or omission during the works.

Hertfordshire Building Control Limited are a Company wholly owned by eight local authorities in Hertfordshire including Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. Please contact them on 01438 879990 or at buildingcontrol@hertfordshirebc.co.uk to discuss the process and all that is involved. Or alternatively refer to the Homeowner Information section on their website at www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk

3. 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.

Determined By:

Mr Francis Saayeng

29 June 2022