

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 201542/FUL

Address: St Michaels Church, Routh Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4JX

Proposal: To repair damaged walls on the perimeter of St Michael's Tilehurst Churchyard.

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: Mr D Bardwell

Received on (valid on): 02/11/2020

Target Date: 25/08/2021, extension of time on decision agreed from 28/12/2020

Site Description and Surrounding Area

St Michael's Church is a Grade II Listed Building in Routh Lane Conservation Area. The church is set within a churchyard and to the north, beyond a modern extension to the church is a well treed boundary between the churchyard and Iris Court. The proposal site is located within Routh Lane Conservation Area.

Proposal

The proposal seeks to repair the damaged walls to the perimeter of St Michael's Church, Tilehurst. Two sections of the perimeter wall have been identified for repair, the two sections consist of a 2.5m section of the wall along New Lane Hill, and a 13m section along Routh Lane.

The determination of this planning application has been delayed in order to address Natural Environment concerns associated with this application prior to determination. This involved negotiations between the Church Council, Dioceses and the Natural Environment Team. A determination date for this application was agreed with the applicant once all the Natural Environment concerns (as detailed in the appraisal of this report) had been addressed.

Plans/Documents Considered

The agent supplied the following plans and documents for this application:

- Existing Site Location and Block Plan - 17683/100
- ~~St Michael's Tilehurst - Requirement Specification; Old Churchyard Boundary Wall Rebuild - Work Package 1~~

Received on Monday 2nd November 2020

- ~~Full Arboricultural Method Statement - Hugo Loudon - June 2021~~

Received on Friday 25th June 2021

- St Michaels Church, Tilehurst Methodology relating to archaeological deposits and human remains - June 2021 Issue 1

Received on Monday 12th July 2021

- Full Arboricultural Method Statement - Hugo Loudon - August 2021
- St Michael's Tilehurst - Requirement Specification; Old Churchyard Boundary Wall Rebuild - Work Package 1
- St Michael's Tilehurst - Requirement Specification; Old Churchyard Boundary Wall Rebuild - Work Package 2 Rev 1.4

Received on Friday 13th August 2021

Internal Consultations

Reading Borough Council, Conservation & Urban Design Officer - Response received on 05/01/2021

- No objections objects to the proposed application, subject to a condition, as they are like for like repairs, with an outline specification.
- There should be a condition that as much original pointing should be retained as possible and it should only be replaced (with soft lime pointing) were it has failed or is of replacement hard cementitious pointing. Further the failed or bad existing pointing, is to be moved by hand tools and no mechanical tools used.

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Response received on 11/08/2021

- The northern section on the Routh Lane was the contentious matter with regard to the adjacent Cypress tree (T8 of TPO 28/07) thought to be the cause of the wall damage. Through discussions, the removal of the Cypress was agreed in principle, subject to acceptable replanting. It was also highlighted that due to the number of trees on site, working methods needed to be confirmed that would not damage the trees or their root areas.
- With reference to the Full Arboricultural Method Statement from Heritage Tree Services Ltd dated June 2021, this is largely acceptable. I have one query and one required amendment. The query relates to the location of the replacement tree which is now in the third choice location (P3) as opposed to P1 location previously discussed with the applicant - it would be useful to know why. With regard to the amendment to the AMS, Section 4 'Wall Repair Methodology' refers to works within the RPA of T14 (Ash) - confirmation is required as to whether this should also refer to the RPA of the adjacent Yew (hard to tell as these trees are not plotted on the Boundary Plan Survey) and confirmation of how roots (of differing sizes) will be dealt with if found when digging new footings (where applicable).
- With regards to the replacement tree species - *Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata' - this is acceptable but the applicant should be aware that although this is an upright form of Hornbeam, it will still get fairly wide at maturity - almost as wide as tall at maturity according to Hilliers (the ultimate height being 12-17m) and 10m wide according to Barchams.

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Response received on 19/08/2021

- I can confirm that the attached revised AMS (received 13/8/21) is acceptable therefore I have no objections to the proposals subject to securing development in accordance with this. It covers AMS and replanting, albeit the tree protection requirements are very limited, hence a condition needs to be tailored.

Berkshire Archaeology - Response received on 20/08/2021

- The methodology as outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) are considered acceptable.
- The WSI notes that copies of the resulting report will be given to the church council and the diocese authority, but does not mention a copy being sent to the Historic Environment Record. Since the work isn't being undertaken as a result of a planning condition, I don't believe there is the obligation conferred by NPPF (section 205 in the newly revised edition) to make the results publicly available through submission to the HER; however, you might ask if they would still be willing to also send the report to the HER on completion.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee - No response received.

External Consultees

A site notice was displayed from Tuesday 6th October 2020, expiring on Tuesday 27th October 2020. A press notice was published from Thursday 15th October 2020, expiring on Thursday 5th November 2020. No responses have been received.

Relevant Planning History

190092 - Replace existing Church notice board with a new one to advertise service times, contact details and publicity for other events. - Application Permitted on 17/03/2019

190828 - Demolition of existing wooden shed and replacement with metal container clad with timber. - Application Permitted on 07/10/2019

Equality Act 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019).

The 'National Planning Policy framework' ('NPPF') 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given).

Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2021;
National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards;

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Routh Lane Conservation Area Appraisal (September 2010)

Appraisal

- a) Principle of Development

The proposed development seeks to repair sections the damaged perimeter wall to the churchyard of St. Michaels Church, Tilehurst. These consist of a 2.5m section along New Hill Lane, with another 13m section along Routh Lane. The development as described within the Work Package documents consists of like for like repair works, rebuilding existing buttresses using recovered bricks, and lime mortar.

The works proposed to the wall within this application are considered minor maintenance and improvement works that will have minimal impact on the surrounding area. In accordance with policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan; the proposed works need to respond positively to their local context and enhance the historic environment of the Borough, providing value to the public realm. The techniques and materials proposed for repairing the wall are considered acceptable and in accordance with policy CC7.

b) Conservation Area

In accordance with policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan; development within Conservation Areas should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The development proposed within this application is considered minor and would restore the perimeter wall in a manner that respects the Routh Lane Conservation Area.

As per paragraph 6.3 of the Routh Lane Conservation Area Appraisal, frontage brick walls are considered a linking feature of the area. The appraisal goes on to highlight the importance of the historic boundary walls as they contribute to the retention of the country lane feel of the area. Paragraph 6.10 also states that boundary features have been retained either in their original or rebuild form throughout the area.

The proposed repair works are considered to accord and not conflict with the guidance and principles of the Routh lane Conservation Area Appraisal. The development seeks the retention and improvement of a boundary wall, a feature within the Conservation Area which has been highlighted as an important link that contributes to the country lane feel of the area. The proposed works seek to use recovered bricks and us lime mortar for pointing to sensitively restore the damaged sections of the wall.

The proposed works are considered in accordance with policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The repairs will restore a wall, which is considered a key feature to the public realm of the Routh Lane Conservation Area. The Conservation & Urban Design Officer has raised no objections, subject to conditions, as the works proposed are like for like repair works.

c) Safeguarding Amenity

The proposed works are like for like repairs to an existing boundary wall. Due to the size, scale and nature of the works, there is not considered to be a harm to the living conditions of nearby residents. The works are considered to improve the boundary wall in terms of its overall visual appearance, with the benefits of the proposal far outweighing any perceived harm. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

d) Natural Environment & Archaeology

The applicant was advised that the problems with the section of the wall to be repaired along Routh lane are contributed to a large mature coniferous tree (TPO) close to the

boundary wall. The roots of the tree combined with the pressure from the weight of the earth within the churchyard has resulted in the boundary wall bulging towards the highway. The advice regarding the impact of the large TPO on the boundary wall was sought by the applicant prior to the submission of this planning application.

The Arboricultural Method Statement as revised proposes a long term solution through the removal of the TPO tree, and replacement planting within the churchyard. It is advised that this would improve the amenity value of the surrounding area, along with the replacement planting of a more suitable tree to the surrounding area. The replacement tree would be situated to the north of the site, next to a pedestrian path.

The AMS has been agreed by Natural Environment, with the proposed tree works considered in accordance with policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

There are graves within the churchyard at St Michaels Church. Excavation works are required to remove the TPO, as a result a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was submitted to ensure the works are carried out safely and that procedures are in place to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains and human burials/skeletal remains within the impact depth of the ground works. The document also advises how to minimise ground-disturbance and how to record and disseminate any findings.

The WSI has been reviewed by Berkshire Archaeology, and the statement is considered appropriate to the scale of the proposed works. It is, however, requested that a copy of the final report be sent to the Historic Environment Record (HER). It is noted in paragraph 4.1.2 of the WSI that a copy of the report will be sent to the Church Council and the Diocese, but it has not been stated that the HER will receive a copy. Given the size, scale and nature of the proposal and the fact that the proposal site is not within an Area of Archaeological Potential (in accordance with policy EN2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan), this is a request and is not material to the consideration of this planning application. An informative will instead be attached to the approval decision notice advising that a copy of the final report be sent to the HER.

Conclusion

The development has been assessed and the works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

Recommendation

GRANT

Conditions

TL1: Time Limit (Standard)

The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

AP1: Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- Existing Site Location and Block Plan - 17683/100

Received on Monday 2nd November 2020

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Received on Friday 13th August 2021

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

M3: Materials (As Specified)

The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of this development shall be as specified on the plans and/or application forms unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. As much of the original pointing as possible shall be retained, with soft lime mortar used for any repointing that may be required. Any bad or failed pointing shall be removed using hand tools and no mechanical tools used.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policy CC7 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Natural Environment

Development shall be in accordance with Full Arboricultural Method Statement, revised August 2021, from Heritage Tree Services Ltd and tree planting specified therein shall be carried out in the planting season following or at the time of implementation of development, whichever is soonest.

If the replacement tree, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, dies, is removed or becomes seriously damaged or diseased, it shall be replaced in the next planting season with another of similar size and species, to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure that reasonable measures are taken to safeguard trees in the interests of local amenity and the enhancement of the development itself in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

IF1: Positive and Proactive Working - approval

The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the agreed timescale for the decision to be issued.

IF5: Terms

Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.

IF6: Building Control

Your attention is drawn to the possible requirement for submission of a Building Regulations application for the proposed development. Please contact Building Control on 0118 937 2449 for advice.

IF7: Complaints about construction

Complaints are commonly received about noise and dust caused by construction and demolition works, particularly working outside reasonable hours and smoke from bonfires associated with the burning of waste on site. The developer is reminded that construction and demolition associated with the approved development will be subject to environmental health law.

Archaeology Informative

Upon completion of the development here by permitted, it is encouraged that a copy of the archaeological fieldwork report is sent to the Historic Environment Record. This is to maximise the public benefit of any findings or discoveries that occur during development.

I23: Advice to adhere to approved Arboricultural Methods Statement

You are advised that only tree works included within the approved Arboricultural Method Statement are approved by virtue of this consent. Any other works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order or to Conservation Area status will require submission of a tree works application or Section 211 Notice respectively.