

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No.: 190761/FUL

Address: 384 The Meadway, Tilehurst

Proposal: New Church and community centre

Case officer: Alison Amoah

Target Expiry: 12/11/19 (ext)

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site includes an existing church building with parking on three sides and an area of former garden land (to the east of the building). It is surrounded by residential properties and has two access points, one via a narrow access way between nos. 382 and 388 The Meadway, the other, from Keswick Close on the north-western corner.

It slopes down gently from south to north.

The existing building comprises two pitched roof buildings, one enclosing the existing main hall with a ridge height of 5.47m above floor level and the second frame similar in height, separated from the main hall by a flat roof. The building itself is set back in the plot ca 15m from Keswick Close and 57m from the Meadway. The plot is irregular in shape 4m at the entrance and ca 56m at its widest on the northern boundary, including the additional parcel of land to the east. There is a small first floor office space in part of the building. At ground floor there is a main worship space, hall and a number of rooms and ancillary facilities

There has been a church on the site since the mid-1950s with additional halls granted permission since that time.

The site is surrounded by established residential development comprising a mix of styles - some bungalows, with accommodation in the roof space, some two storey dwellings and well-established landscaped boundaries and some trees.

Proposal:

To demolish the existing building (511sqm GIA) and construct a new two storey building plus a second floor (third storey) pavilion in part of the roof (918sqm GIA), on a slightly enlarged footprint.

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| Ground Floor - | Entrance foyer, church café, commercial kitchen/ servery, flexible worship space, meeting rooms, and associated toilet provision. |
| First Floor - | Five no. flexible meeting/teaching spaces and associated toilet facilities. |
| Second Floor - | Offices, prayer room and art studio and toilet. |
| Externally - | Play area and terrace and enhanced landscaping. The amended proposed car parking layout is for 41 no. spaces compared to the existing 22. |

The agent identifies that the use of the building would remain as is with no new uses. The café would be ancillary to the church use and not a public drinking/eating establishment in its own right. The DAS states that the current activities that take place are set to continue and that the purpose of the larger building is to provide better / more fit-for-purpose spaces to enable the church to continue to operate the community activities that it already operates, and has done for many years. For example, the proposal includes for an art studio to serve the existing art group.

Plans and documents considered:

The following information informed the final assessment: As received 4th September 2019, unless otherwise stated:

- Block Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/101 Rev C, received 24th June 2019

- Ground Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/200 Rev G
- First Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/201 Rev G
- Second Floor Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/202 Rev E
- Elevations as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/205 Rev M, received 8th November 2019
- Site Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/250 Rev M, received 8th October 2019
- Section A as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/210 Rev D, received 10th May 2019
- Longitudinal Sections as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/260 Rev A, received 5th September 2019
- 3D Aerial North West as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/270 Rev A
- 3D Aerial South East as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/271 Rev A
- 3D North West Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/272 Rev A
- South East Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/273 Rev A
- North East Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/274 Rev A
- Planting Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev C, received 16th September 2019
- Hard Landscape Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev C, received 16th September 2019
- Acoustic Design Specification, Ref: M4274 v.1, dated 23/10/18, prepared by Ian Sharland Ltd, received 10th May 2019
- Air Quality Assessment, Project no: P3208.2.0, dated 15th April 2019, prepared by Agb Environmental, received 10th May 2019
- Arboricultural Report, Document no: J027 - Arb Report - V1.3, dated 18/7/19, prepared by Sylvan Ecology, received 24th July 2019
- Energy and Sustainability Statement, dated 10/9/18, prepared by MES Building Solutions, received 10th May 2019
- Framework Travel Plan, ref: HH4180484/DK/004 Issue 1, dated 8/4/19, prepared by Glanville, received 10th May 2019
- Bat Emergence Survey, ref: R2300/a, dated August 2019, prepared by John Wenman, received 12th August 2019
- Car Park Management Plan, Ref: HH4180484/DK/006 Issue 1, dated 18/9/19, prepared by Glanville, received 18th September 2019

Other plans reviewed during the course of the application are included at the end of the report.

Discussion with the agent:

There has been a lot of liaison and discussion with the agent during the course of the application and the agent has responded with additional information, amended plans and clarification throughout the process.

Issues raised by the Case Officer with respect to the initial plans following consultation included:

- Parking
- Noise and disturbance within outside terrace, café seating area and play areas
- Overlooking/perceived overlooking from a number of windows
- Use and numbers of users

Changes submitted sought to address the above and a further consultation was undertaken with the amended information in September 2019.

Relevant Planning History:

3049 - Church - Approved 11/6/1954

4674 - Church - Approved 26/10/1956

8588 - Meeting Hall - Approved 26/5/1961
9195 - Meeting Hall - Approved 21/12/1961
11094 - Temporary Sunday School and Youth Club - Approved 6/12/1963
18335 - Extension - Refused 19 March, 1971
19449 - Church - Approved 17 March, 1972
20569 - Erection of Brick Built Building for Public Worship to seat 200 people - Approved 22/9/1972
93/00861/FD - Single Storey Disabled Toilet and baby Changing Room - Approved 10/12/1993
01/00292/ADV - Erection of 2x Non-Illuminated Signs (Retrospective Application) - Consented 24/5/2001
160297/PREAPP - Redevelopment of the Existing Church Site to Provide Enhanced Facilities and Seating for up to 400 (Total Net Floor Area 705 sqm) - Observations sent 24th June 2016

Public Consultation Responses: Nos 5-19 (odd) Keswick Close, 28-44 (even) Keswick Close, 3A and 5A Keswick Close, and 378-382 & 388-390 The Meadway were consulted and a site notice was displayed. 22 no. letters of support and 32 no. letters of objection were received, raising the following concerns (*full responses are available to view on line*):

- Parking/increase in traffic and highway safety - existing and resulting from further use and expansion.
- Disruption from construction vehicles.
- Loss of privacy and overlooking from new windows at the increased height.
- Noise and disturbance from the building and use of external spaces.
- The appearance of the building would not be in keeping with other buildings.
- The overall scale of the building is too high and too large.
- The building would create further drainage issues and flooding.
- Landscaping needs to be properly maintained; appears to be over underground drainage/attenuation tanks; loss of willow; retain hedges along boundaries.
- Increased crime.
- Detrimental effect on ecology and biodiversity - Stag beetles have been sighted in neighbouring gardens; large koi carp pond close to the boundary fence. Bats in the church loft.
- Opening hours are excessive - Will there be a restriction on private hire, days and hours of hire, the number of attendees, length of time occupied? Will the eight meeting rooms be in continual use throughout the day as indicated in breakdown of activities therefore adding to increased noise and vehicles?
- Covenant issues.
- Unacceptable change of use and intensification of the site; kitchen is a commercial kitchen.
- No details of plant on roof.

Similar issues were set out with regard to the consultation on amended plans.

Other consultation responses:

RBC Ecology: The ecology report (agb Environmental - Nov. 2018) submitted with this application has been undertaken to an appropriate standard. The report states that:

"The Church was assessed as having low suitability for roosting bats due to a small number of features which could be used by crevice dwelling bats. One nocturnal survey (dawn re-entry or dusk emergence) is recommended between May and August in line with current guidance (Collins, 2016). If roosting bats are identified using the building and impacts are considered likely to cause a legal offence, a further appropriately spaced bat emergence / re-entry survey between May - September and a Mitigation Licence from Natural England would be required prior to works affecting a roost."

The results of the surveys would need to be provided before this application is determined. Further details below.

All species of bats receive special protection under UK law and it is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (The Habitat Regulations), deliberately or recklessly to destroy or damage their roosts, or to disturb, kill or injure them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

The licensing process is separate and distinct from planning permission, but the Local Planning Authority has statutory obligations under the Habitat Regulations. This means that the Local Planning Authority needs to be satisfied that the proposals are likely to meet the three tests of the Habitat Regulations (see above) and that a licence is not unlikely to be obtained before they can issue planning permission.

Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (this document has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

In this case, since 1) the extent to which bats (a protected species) will be affected by the proposals has not been established, and 2) there appear to be no “exceptional circumstances”, the application would not be in accordance with the above planning policy.

The Bat Conservation Trust’s Bat Survey Guidelines state that to determine if a building hosts a bat roost where it has been assessed as having “low” suitability for use by roosting bats (as is the case here) one dusk emergence or pre-dawn re-entry surveys needs to be carried out. Surveys need to be carried out between May and September, with at least one taking place in the optimum period of May to August (inclusive)

Planning Officer note: A bat emergence survey was submitted and Ecology provided further comments as follows:

“The bat survey, John Wenman Ecological Consultants dated August 2019, has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that, as long as the recommendations given in the report are followed, the proposals are unlikely to affect roosting bats. As such, subject to the condition below, there are no objections to this application on ecology grounds:

Condition: The development is to be carried out in accordance with the details given in sections 4.2.3 to 4.2.5 of the bat survey report (John Wenman Ecological Consultants dated August 2019) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the council.

Reason: To ensure that bats, a group of protected species, are not adversely affected by the proposals.”

Natural Environment: There are few trees of any note within the site, although there are larger trees beyond the boundary, the roots of which will be growing under the

existing hardstanding within the church site. The applicant has submitted a tree survey, impact assessment and method statement by Sylvan Ecology in support of this application which states that as there is no impact on the trees as the roots are under hard standing.

However, I note from the landscaping scheme that the tarmac is to be lifted in order to lay porous block paving within the RPA of trees T3 and T4 and for soft landscaping within the RPAs of T1 and T5. These ground works have the potential to cause harm to the trees around the site and in a worst case scenario, excessive root severance could destabilise the trees putting persons and property at risk. I would therefore like to see a more comprehensive method statement which details the steps to be taken in order to prevent damage to the rooting areas of boundary trees around the site during the course of these landscaping works.

Planning Officer note: An updated arboricultural report (Rev 1.3) was submitted and Natural Environment confirmed that this was acceptable subject to conditions: L1 - hard and soft landscaping in accordance with approved details; L2b -The approved landscaping to be completed in accordance with approved drawings, prior to occupation and shall take place no later than the first planting season following the date of occupation; L3 - planted materials shall be maintained for five years; and tree protection compliance.

Further to amended plans received in September 2019 Natural Environment further commented *"The applicant will need to update the tree protection scheme to reflect the changes to the areas of hard and soft landscaping - at the same time please emphasise that the tree protection plan needs to show the location of Tree Protection Fencing. The fencing does not need to go around areas of hard standing which are to be retained, but around areas of soft landscaping. Areas of hard standing within the RPA of trees which are 1) to be lifted and replaced with additional hard standing - or 2) to be lifted and landscaped should be identified separately and cross referenced with the relevant reference in the Arboricultural Method statement.*

Other than that, despite the slight loss of amenity planting on site (which will not be visible from outside of the site), I have no objections to these amendments."

Natural Environment (confirmed 14/10/19) that a revised tree protection plan would be required (L6a) and that works should be in accordance with the approved AMS (L6b)

Environmental Protection & Nuisance: Noise generating development - The proposal is for a church with community use. The concerns with regards noise relate to noise from any plant (e.g. air con, kitchen extraction etc) and breakout noise from church and community use (e.g. music and amplified voices etc).

The application is supported by a noise assessment. The assessment identifies the limit levels to be met to ensure compliance with RBC planning requirements.

"Noise from any activity within the new building shall be limited to the following noise level, assessed at 1m from the facade of neighbouring residential properties: 07.00 - 23.00 40 dB(A) LAeq,30mins"

The assessment states that for the above to be met, doors and windows will need to be closed during events in excess of 75dB.

"Noise from any new building services plant shall be limited to the following noise levels, assessed at 1m from the facade of neighbouring residential properties: 07.00 - 23.00hrs 26 dB(A) LAeq,1hr 23.00 - 07.00hrs 17 dB(A) LAeq,15mins. If the noise from the plant is tonal

or intermittent, these limits should be reduced to account for the acoustic characteristics of the noise as recommended in BS4142.”

So long as the design and operation of the building ensures that the above limits are met, I have no objections to the proposed development on the grounds of noise.

Air Quality - Increased exposure - An air quality assessment has been submitted, it concludes that air quality exposure or increased emissions are not of concern as a result of development, with the exception of dust and PM10 during demolition and construction phases. A list of suggested dust mitigation measures are recommended in appendix 4. I recommend that the relevant measures are incorporated into the noise and dust mitigation plan which contractors must adhere to. I have no objections on the grounds of air quality.

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.

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.

Recommended conditions - Control of Noise and Dust - CMS to be submitted; Hours of Working - construction and demolition phase; and no bonfires.

Transport: Initially Transport objected to the proposal based on the view that the proposed development would not ensure that the parking provision would be appropriate to the needs of the development, which would be likely to lead to an unacceptable increase in competition for on-street parking spaces resulting in blocked and congested roads and streets on the surrounding Highway Network.

In addition to the above, Transport identified that *“the Transport Statement asserts that the only other way to reduce the level of on-street parking would be to introduce a strong Travel Plan with initiatives which encourage non-car use. This planning application is accompanied by a framework Travel Plan. However, it is acknowledged that the church is liable to attract attendees from both the local area and the wider Reading area and, therefore, some worshippers would have no alternative other to use their car.*

Therefore, the proposed Travel Plan measures do not omit the need for a reasonable level of parking.

The Transport Statement asserts that the church could consider allowing double parking within the church car park. However, this would need to be managed to allow worshippers to leave when they need to and may deter the full use of the available on-site parking capacity in favor of accessible spaces located on-street. This is also likely to lead to blocking of the emergency access and is an unacceptable measure to prevent overspill onto the local highway network.”

Transport asked for confirmation of whether there would be any change or increase in the number activities on-site during the week.

In view of the above Transport originally objected for the following reason:

1. The proposed layout fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking/reversing movements on the Meadway or surround highway network,

adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Core Strategy Policy CS24 and Sites and Detailed Policies document Policy DM12.

Planning Officer note: Further to the receipt of amended information (Proposed Site Plan - TGR.18/250 Revision M (Received by email 08/10/2019); Transport Statement - Issue 4: 08 October 2019; and Car Park Management Plan - Issue 1: 18 September 2019), Transport provided revised comments as follows:

“In 2005 Tilehurst Free Church and Groveland’s Christian Fellowship amalgamated to form The Gate, formerly named Reading Community Church. The proposal includes the construction of a new church and community centre to provide high quality and up to date facilities for the community activities provided by the church with meeting rooms, offices and associated storage and toilets. It is also proposed to include a Drop-in Café with associated kitchen to support the community activities.

The site lies within a residential neighbourhood. The site is accessed from The Meadway via a narrow driveway between no. 382 and 388 The Meadway. A secondary access is available from Keswick Close. During peak times (Sunday services), a one-way circulation route is enforced with entry from The Meadway and exit via Keswick Close.

The Meadway is a single carriageway two-way road with no parking restrictions. On Sundays church users regularly park on street on both sides of the carriageway if they are unable to use the on-site car park. Whilst this does not fully prevent the flow of traffic, vehicles often have to give way if a vehicle is travelling in the opposite direction.

The existing church currently has a maximum seating capacity of approximately 300 people and the proposals would increase the worship space to 384 people (an increase of 28%). The new drop-in café is located adjacent to the main entrance with a commercial kitchen to serve into both the worship space and the café. The proposals also include a range of flexible meeting rooms on the first floor and office and art room on the second floor.

Parking

There are two regular services on a Sunday morning. Between 9am and 10am there is a Prayer service whilst the main family service takes place at 11am. Across these two services, there are around 250 worshippers who attend regularly with up 170 people for the 11am service.

There are currently 36 marked parking spaces provided within the site although not all spaces comply with the minimum dimensions and manoeuvring distances (aisle widths) outlined within Manual for Streets. A parking survey was undertaken by a member of the church community for the main 11am service on six separate Sundays and the results are shown in Table 1 of the Transport Statement. However, there is no information regarding the congregation size on each of these survey days.

The parking surveys show that on average 28 vehicles currently use the existing car park during the main Sunday service (ranging between 27 - 30 spaces) and at least six spaces were left un-occupied. On the survey dates, an average of 13 vehicles was parked on-street on the Meadway or Keswick Close. On two of the survey dates, a total of 17 vehicles were parked on-street. Therefore, it is evident that the existing provision does not meet the current demand during peak Sunday services.

The Transport Statement indicates that the existing pattern and timing of services will not change following the re-development of the site, but there is the potential for the number of worshippers attending the services to increase.

The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide;

- 1 space per 8 fixed seats and/or 1 space per 16msqm open hall
- 1 space per 5sqm of A3 use

Based on the proposed number of seats (384), the development requires 48 parking spaces or 37 parking spaces based on 595m² of useable church spaces excluding the corridors, toilets, and store rooms).

The proposed site plan (Proposed Site Plan - TGR.18/250 Revision M) demonstrates a total of 41 parking spaces including two spaces for minibuses and two disabled spaces. All spaces will be to the required dimensions. It is noted that the layout includes the provision of seven double spaces (tandem) to be used by church staff and volunteers. To ensure that all the spaces are utilized, the church will operate a car park management plan during Sunday services. The Car Park Management Plan has been submitted with the application documents. It is proposed that the car park management plan will be subject to an annual review to ensure that it remains current.

It is stated that currently 250 people attend the morning services and if this increases by 28% increase in the number of seats, then there would be an additional 70 attendees. As stated, the Parking Standards identifies that the parking provision may be either be calculated based on fixed seats (1 space per 8 seats) and/or as an open hall (1 space per 16sqm open hall). It is noted that the Transport Statement indicates that the seating will not be fixed in the physical sense, however, there will be a fixed number of seats which will be put out during Sunday Services. Therefore, I do not feel that it is appropriate to apply the standard for an open hall when seating will be required for the main function when the church attracts its highest number of visitors. I note that the intention is that the worship hall will be laid out to seat up to 250 worshippers, to match the existing morning congregation size, and that the church only anticipates a modest growth in its congregation size. However, in order to support the application, I would recommend that a condition is applied to control the growth of the church up to a maximum number of 328 attendees. This has been calculated by total number of parking spaces (41) x 8 fixed seats in order to comply with the Council's Parking Standards.

The Transport Statement acknowledges the concerns of local residents regarding the existing levels of on-street parking in the area during Sunday services. In addition, to increasing the parking provision within the site, the Church will introduce a strong Travel Plan with initiatives which encourage sustainable travel measures to reduce the volume of on-site parking.

The travel survey indicated that there is a high percentage of attendees that currently travel to the site by car. The modal shares indicated that 81% of attendees currently use a car to access the site and 45% of the car users travel alone. Only 4% of the attendees travel to the site with four or more people. The church has two minibuses which provide lifts for regular attendees and these pick up worshippers from different locations around the town but the travel surveys do not provide an accurate account of how many attendees use this facility.

The proposed Travel Plan measures do not omit the need for a reasonable level of parking, however, they do promote and encourage sustainable travel (such as promoting walking, cycling and car sharing). The Travel Plan should be subject to an annual review, and implement appropriate travel measures to promote sustainable travel and reduce car travel to the site for the duration of the review period. This is to be secured by condition.

In terms of the weekday use, it is stated that existing church building is used for various activities during the week. These include:

- A group for people over the age of 55 takes place on Wednesday afternoons between 2pm and 4pm. Around 30 people attend each week;
- A church group meets on Thursday mornings between 9am and 12 noon and attendance it typically around 20 people;
- Messy church takes place on Friday mornings between 10am and 12 noon with around 50 parents and children attending;

In terms of the weekday use, the additional information submitted provides clarification regarding the usage of the meeting spaces. There are no current plans for the weekday use of the church to change or increase from the current situation. I note that during the week, there is only one group using the church at any one time which ensures that there is not shortfall of parking spaces with the site or increased use of a narrow driveway although there is the potential for this usage to change in the future as with any other community building. Therefore, the car park management plan should be reviewed to consider weekday use if there is a change from the current situation.

In terms of the cafe use, the café will be open during the week for church users and those already on the site for other activities. It is stated that it is not anticipated that non-church users will regularly visit the café, although the church may decide to open it for local residents. The café is unlikely to become a destination in its own right, therefore, I accept that its operation is likely to be ancillary to the other activities at the church.

In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a minimum of 12 cycle spaces (based on 595sqm of usable floor space). The cycle parking provisions are conveniently located within a shelter.

The Council's Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy 2011 - 2026 includes policies for investing in new infrastructure to improve connections throughout and beyond Reading which include a network of publicly available Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points to encourage and enable low carbon or low energy travel choices for private and public transport. Policy TR5 of the emerging Local Plan also states that "*Within communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point.*" In view of this, the development will make provisions for 4 EV charging points at time of build.

Any full application would be conditioned to ensure a Construction Method Statement is submitted and approved before any works commence on-site. Any works affecting the highway would have to comply with the Borough's Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway."

Planning Officer note: Transport recommended the following conditions: Restriction on use - maximum of 328 people. Construction Method Statement; Vehicle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans; Vehicle access provided in accordance with approved plans; Bicycle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans; Car Parking Management Plan - implementation of approved plan; Travel Plan Implementation; Travel Plan Review; Electric Charging points; and Highways (informative)."

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The proposal includes level access, a lift, disabled parking, and accessible toilet facilities, which should have a positive effect with respect to protected groups identified by the Act. 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. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework 2019

National Planning Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan November 2019

Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change

Policy CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Policy EN15: Air Quality

Policy EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

Policy EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

Policy EN18: Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems

Policy H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

Policy H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens

Policy H14: Suburban Renewal and Regeneration

Policy TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy

Policy TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities

Policy TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

Planning Obligations Under S106, April 2015

APPRAISAL:

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle
- b) Design, Appearance & Scale
- c) Impact on Residential Amenity
- d) Landscape & Ecology
- e) Transport/ Parking
- f) Sustainability
- g) Environmental Effects
- h) S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy

a) Principle

The principle of the proposed redevelopment and enlargement of the building would be acceptable, on the basis that it would provide an enhanced community use over and above the existing. This would comply with policy OU1, but this would need to be subject to meeting other policy considerations.

Issues were raised through neighbour consultation that the proposed use is different to the existing, however the proposed use as a church with community activities is as the building is already used under D1 use class and officers are satisfied that, subject to restrictive conditions, there would be no material intensification of use at the site.

b) Design, Appearance & Scale

Policy CC7: Design requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form include layout, landscape, density and mix, scale - height and massing and architectural detail and materials.

The existing building is a tall single storey structure, with some first floor office accommodation and storage within the roof space. It comprises two long, pitched roof, hall structures linked by a flat roof. It is faced in buff brick and buff stone cladding, and has a tiled roof, but is not considered to have any special architectural merit. The overall maximum height of the existing building is just under 5.5m, 26.8 metres deep and 22.8m wide (at widest).



The amended proposed scheme would have a maximum height of 9.12m, although the majority of the building would be an equivalent two storey structure of 6.01m. The depth of the building would be 26.06m and the width of the main part of the church would be 20.01m, with an additional single storey side extension of 5.5m wide by 7m deep, to accommodate the proposed café. The overall change in footprint area would be 24sqm (506sqm increasing to 530sqm).



The following plan extract shows the difference in building footprint (black line on plan below shows proposed footprint; red existing):



The layout of the proposed site would be largely as existing with the siting of the building almost identical to the existing, with a small increase in overall footprint. This is considered to be acceptable within the overall plot size and retains sufficient layoff from the boundaries with surrounding residential properties.

A number of neighbours have objected to the overall height of the proposed building. Although the proposal is partially three storeys, the majority of the proposed building is equivalent to two storeys, with a reduced roof pitch at the northern end (closest to Keswick Close) to minimise its visual impact. The third storey is stepped in on all sides, and significantly so from the properties to the north on Keswick Close, such that the third storey is set within the southern half of the roofscape. The back to back relationship of the third storey is ca 34.5m from the rear wall of no. 9 Keswick Close) and the rear of whole building (i.e. 2 storey) is ca 22.6m. There is a side to side relationship with no 44, Keswick Close of 19.4m. The nearest property to the church is 5A Keswick Close, however this is at an angle to the site. The closest point (corner of 3rd storey and rear corner of 5A) is 16.1m.

The amended scheme has reduced the width/footprint of the café so that it would be further from the boundary with 5A Keswick Close and reduced the height of the café annexe, so that it would have less visual impact and the east facing glazing was omitted.

It is considered that the distances are sufficient to ensure that the overall scale of the proposed building is appropriate within this context. Although the overall scale includes for a partial second floor, the majority of the proposed building would 'read' as a two storey building, with the first floor roof height not significantly greater than the existing ridge lines. Matters regarding residential amenity are addressed below.

The surrounding area includes two storey dwellings with pitched roofs, and the proposed overall height, which is mostly two storey, with a set-back much smaller third storey, is considered to maintain the overall character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy CC7.

There are a range of building finishes in the area, with residential properties mostly of red brick, but some with render. The existing established church building is already different to the surrounding properties with external finishes being buff brick and buff stone cladding but

its location well back the Meadway (as the photo below shows) means that it is not readily viewable from The Meadway or Keswick Close, except for glimpsed views.



The proposed design includes double height side windows surrounding the worship space, buff brick and standing seam copper for the roof and elements of the end elevations (front and rear).

The large areas of glazing to the front provide a much more welcoming appearance than the existing building, more consistent with its community function as a church.

The combination of the proposed materials to the third floor, comprising glazed curtain walling with a projecting roof plane and brise soleil gives this a less bulky appearance than a solid roof form and provides some visual interest.

Given the relatively secluded location, it is considered acceptable for this non-residential building to use materials and a design, which is distinct from the surrounding residential properties. It is considered to have a more ecclesiastical 'feel' than the existing building, which is considered wholly acceptable. The overall design and appearance is therefore considered to accord with Policy CC7.

c) Impact on Residential Amenity

Residential amenity is assessed against Policy CC8 which requires developments to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; and Crime and safety.

A number of neighbour objections relate to additional noise and disturbance, privacy and overlooking and visual dominance of the proposed scheme.

The submitted information identifies that the enlargement of the building is to provide for better and enhanced facilities for existing uses and provide for a "better variety of fit for purpose rooms to suit the needs of the activities that already take place. However, there would be some extra capacity, specifically with regard to the worship space, but that this remains unchanged from the existing situation."

The DAS includes details of the weekly activities and hours of use and maximum attendance. It is recommended that conditions are included to restrict the overall maximum numbers of users on the site at any one time and to control the hours of use. In terms of numbers this is an aspect required by Transport, as referred to in section e) below.

It should be noted that the DAS (P16) also identifies other community initiatives that the church supports, but it has been confirmed by the applicant that a number of these are not intended to meet/ move to the Meadway site; and others are irregular and small events, which are not currently running, but could be held at other venues or people's homes. It is also not the intention to operate the spaces on a commercial rental basis.

In terms of noise, a noise impact assessment has been submitted. This concludes that predicted noise levels will generally be within acceptable limits but that noise from the proposed Sanctuary (worship space) and café must be managed to ensure that when internal noise levels exceed 75 dB(A), all windows or doors must be kept closed. The external walls, windows and doors would be designed to specified acoustic criteria. The building would also be ventilated with mechanical assistance, with acoustic attenuation on ductwork and ventilation equipment, i.e. by means which do not rely on the opening of windows to the Sanctuary and cafe area.

Objectors have raised concerns with regard to the existing use and considered likely impact from perceived intensification of use of the proposed outdoor areas. These include a fenced play surface area (no play equipment) and terrace.

In association with the existing church, people already use spaces on the eastern side of the building and children play outside. The proposed scheme includes an acoustic timber screen to the entire length of the terrace to reduce airborne noise from the terrace, as well as preventing views into the neighbour's garden. This area is at a higher level than 5A Keswick Close, as is the existing position, but having visited the site the Case Officer is satisfied that the proposed measures will ensure that the proposal will not cause detrimental harm to the neighbour. In addition there will be new planting along the boundary with 5A Keswick Close, creating both additional privacy, but would also prevent climbing of the fence (by children). The proposed landscaping scheme indicates that landscaping is to be retained and enhanced along the southern boundary. Additionally, in contrast to the existing unstructured outside space, which neighbours have identified as a cause of nuisance, the proposed landscape designs introduce specific zones within the garden area to enable better management of the outdoor space.

With regard to noise egress from the building the proposed building would be constructed to current standards in accordance with building regulations and would therefore be a significant improvement over the existing building. Conditions are recommended to ensure that the scheme complies with the recommendations of the Noise Assessment.

Officers agree with the concerns from objectors regarding overlooking with the original design and in the amended plans, a number of windows have been amended to be obscure glazed as specifically labelled on the plans. At the ground floor boundary fence heights, and existing and proposed boundary planting will protect privacy to the neighbouring properties. In any case the ground floor doors serving the rear exits are proposed to be obscure glazed.

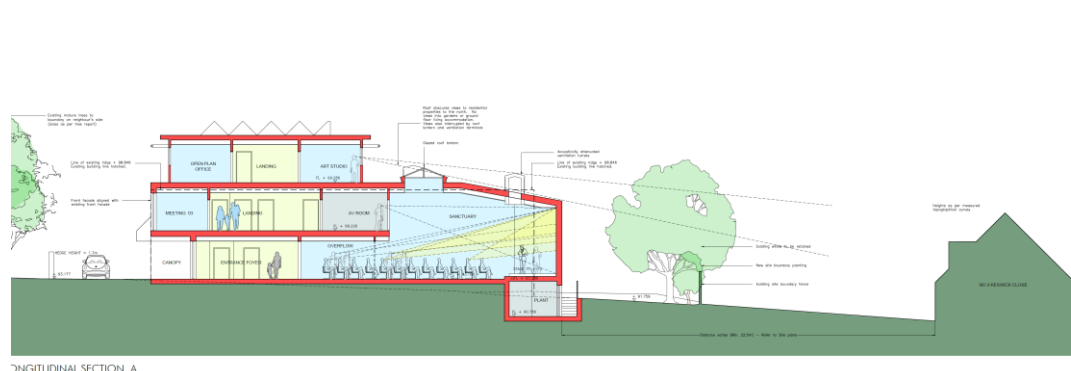
A number of first floor side facing windows are proposed to be obscure glazed. The Case Officer also raised the issue of potential overlooking from some of the meeting rooms through the double height worship space windows via the internal glazed screens of the rooms. A plan was submitted (no: 255) which demonstrates that only oblique views would occur into the corners of 5A Keswick Close's garden, and would not be of the main rear elevation of the property, its living rooms or any of its windows. It is considered that other properties are at such a distance as there would be no loss of privacy, and existing trees and new planting provide good screening.

At second floor the amended plans show the minister's office window re-orientated to face south, not east. The north facing elevation is comprised of windows, clear glass, spandrel

glass and obscure glass. Views to the north (see section below) are obscured by the roof, roof lantern and vent terminals. The first floor flat roof / parapet partially obscures views from the second floor rooms. All east and west facing windows are obscured glass. Properties to the south are at some distance and some screened by existing mature trees.

Although the proposed building would be visible from neighbouring properties and this would be a change to the existing view they would experience in this suburban environment, this is not a reason in itself to refuse the proposal. The Case Officer considers that the separation distances, which are almost identical to existing, the significant setback of the second floor with respect to Keswick Close, and obscure glazing, combined with existing and proposed landscaping ensure that the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties would be retained.

A condition is recommended to ensure the retention of obscure glazing in the proposed locations.



Some objectors refer to the use of the roof and the effect of this on loss of privacy. The agent has confirmed that this would only be accessible for maintenance purpose and a condition is recommended to restrict its use.

In terms of matters raised regarding disturbance from construction vehicles a condition is recommended for the submission and approval of a Construction Method Statement.

d) Landscape and Ecology

Policy EN14 requires new development to make provision for tree retention and planting. The amended scheme provides for all existing trees to be retained including the Willow on the northern boundary. The landscape proposal includes for a high quality landscape scheme which will enhance the appearance of the site and include for new boundary planting. Natural Environment has confirmed that the scheme is acceptable and accords with Policy EN14, subject to conditions.

The submitted ecological report confirms that the site is of negligible ecological value but with high potential for nesting species of garden birds. The report recommends that there would be the opportunity to enhance the site through measures such as bird boxes, sparrow terraces, Insect house, bumblebee box, hedgehog house, and wildlife garden. A condition is included requiring a plan for biodiversity enhancements to be submitted, approved and implemented. This would accord with Policy EN12, which states that “*development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity .. and should provide a net gain wherever possible*” as supported by the NPPF.

Ecology in their consultation response required the submission of a bat emergence survey, which was subsequently provided and confirmed as acceptable. A condition is recommended

which requires the scheme to be undertaken in accordance with the advice in the survey document.

e) Transport/ Parking

As set out above within the consultation section there are existing issues regarding parking and transport movements. RBC Transport thoroughly reviewed the proposal and made it clear that any scheme would need to demonstrate no worsening of the existing situation. Further detail on numbers and hours of use, amendments to overall on-site parking provision both in terms of overall maximum numbers, through doubling up of some spaces, but also of the required size and accessibility, associated car parking management plan and detailed travel plan were provided by the agent, which satisfactorily addressed Transport's original objection.

The movements through the site are intended to be via a one-way system with vehicles accessing from the Meadway and existing via Keswick Close. A condition is included to this effect.

Subject to attaching a number of conditions including with respect to car parking management, restricting the overall numbers to 328, and travel plan, the scheme is considered to accord with the requirements of policies TR3, TR4 and TR5.

f) Sustainability

All new developments need to demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change (Policy CC3). Additionally a new church building will need meet BREEAM requirements and Policy CC2 requires minor non-residential schemes (i.e. less than 1000sqm) to achieve a 'Very Good' standard as a minimum.

The submitted BREEAM Pre-Assessment identifies that a score of 65.61 % (Very Good) is achievable.

The Energy and Sustainability Statement identifies a number of proposed measures including: PV panels; design of internal spaces and orientation to provide natural daylight and sunlight; adaptable and accessible spaces; use of smart meters and low energy lighting; reduction of impermeable paving and increasing permeable paving to reduce run-off.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with policies CC2 and CC3 and a post construction BREEAM submission is recommended to be conditioned.

g) Environmental Effects

Noise: The key issues for the proposal are with regard to noise from any plant and breakout noise from the use itself. Policy EN16 requires development to not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or air pollution. Policy EN17 specifically addressed noise generating equipment requiring such plant to be at least 10dBA below existing background level and the submitted noise assessment identifies that:

"Noise from any activity within the new building shall be limited to the following noise level, assessed at 1m from the facade of neighbouring residential properties: 07.00 - 23.00 40 dB(A) LAeq,30mins" and that "Noise from any new building services plant shall be limited to the following noise levels, assessed at 1m from the facade of neighbouring residential properties: 07.00 - 23.00hrs 26 dB(A) LAeq,1hr 23.00 - 07.00hrs 17 dB(A) LAeq,15mins. If the noise from the plant is tonal or intermittent, these limits should be reduced to account for the acoustic characteristics of the noise as recommended in BS4142."

The assessment also states that in order for the above to be met the doors and windows will need to be closed during events in excess of 75db. As set out in section c) above the building

would be designed to specified acoustic criteria and would also be ventilated with mechanical assistance. The noise impact assessment identifies that there would be a sound level device installed in the spaces. Such devices do vary in specification, but they would usually emit a sound and/or light to notify that the sound level has exceeded the maximum permitted level, and they can also be installed such that the power supply for example to the PA is cut off if the maximum sound level were exceeded. This would form part of the building management.

Environmental Protection and Nuisance have no objection subject to the operation of the building ensuring that the limits set out in the assessment are met, a condition is therefore included that the proposal is undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the noise impact assessment.

Air Quality: Policy EN15 requires developments to “*have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality*”. The submitted air quality assessment concludes that air quality exposure or increased emissions are not of concern as a result of development apart from with regard to dust and PM10 during demolition and construction phases. A list of dust mitigation measures is recommended and Environmental Protection and Nuisance have confirmed that such measures would need to be incorporated into the required noise and dust mitigation plan for the construction and demolition phases of the development, which is included as a condition along with relevant hours of working.

Drainage and Flooding:

A number of respondents have raised concern over historic flooding and drainage issues due to an inadequate drainage system. This resulted in Thames Water installing an attenuation/ Storage tank below the car park. The agent has confirmed that the external works with drainage system access covers and access arrangements to be retained as existing. In addition the proposal incorporates permeable paving and soft landscaping which would reduce the surface-water run-off over the existing tarmac-only parking/driveways. In fact the submitted drainage strategy proposes to exceed this, as it sets out that the discharge rate for the surface water would be attenuated to match the existing greenfield rate. This is considered to accord with Policy EN18 and a condition is included for the submission and approval of a sustainable drainage plan and maintenance and management plan.

h) S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy

There are no requirements for S106 obligations as the proposal is not a major scheme, nor are there site related requirements.

Although this type of development would be liable for Community Infrastructure Levy under the Council’s Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule it has a zero charge.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

Conditions:

- 1) TL1 - Standard time limit
- 2) AP1 - Approved plans -
As received 4th September 2019, unless otherwise stated:
 - Block Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/101 Rev C, received 24th June 2019
 - Ground Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/200 Rev G
 - First Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/201 Rev G
 - Second Floor Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/202 Rev E
 - Elevations as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/205 Rev M, received 8th November 2019

- Site Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/250 Rev M, received 8th October 2019
 - Section A as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/210 Rev D, received 10th May 2019
 - Longitudinal Sections as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/260 Rev A, received 5th September 2019
 - 3D Aerial North West as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/270 Rev A
 - 3D Aerial South East as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/271 Rev A
 - 3D North West Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/272 Rev A
 - South East Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/273 Rev A
 - North East Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/274 Rev A
 - Planting Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev C, received 16th September 2019
 - Hard Landscape Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev C, received 16th September 2019
 - Acoustic Design Specification, Ref: M4274 v.1, dated 23/10/18, prepared by Ian Sharland Ltd, received 10th May 2019
 - Air Quality Assessment, Project no: P3208.2.0, dated 15th April 2019, prepared by Agb Environmental, received 10th May 2019
 - Arboricultural Report, Document no: J027 - Arb Report - V1.3, dated 18/7/19, prepared by Sylvan Ecology, received 24th July 2019
 - Energy and Sustainability Statement, dated 10/9/18, prepared by MES Building Solutions, received 10th May 2019
 - Framework Travel Plan, ref: HH4180484/DK/004 Issue 1, dated 8/4/19, prepared by Glanville, received 10th May 2019
 - Bat Emergence Survey, ref: R2300/a, dated August 2019, prepared by John Wenman, received 12th August 2019
 - Car Park Management Plan, Ref: HH4180484/DK/006 Issue 1, dated 18/9/19, prepared by Glanville, received 18th September 2019
- 3) M2 - Materials
 - 4) SU5 - BREEAM Non-residential Interim
 - 5) SU6 - BREEAM post construction
 - 6) SU7 - Sustainable Drainage to be approved
 - 7) Landscaping - in accordance with approved plans, implemented, and maintained
 - 8) L6a -Amended Tree Protection Plan to be submitted and approved
 - 9) L7A - AMS and Tree Protection Plan in accordance with approved details
 - 10) Bats
 - 11) L10 - Biodiversity enhancements to be submitted, approved and implemented
 - 12) N1 - Amplified music hours
 - 13) N10 - Noise mitigation
 - 14) N8 - Noise levels of plant
 - 15) Details of acoustic fence to be submitted and approved in writing and implemented and retained thereafter.
 - 16) N16 - Hours of Opening
 - 17) N19 - External lighting details to be submitted, approved and implemented.
 - 18) C1 - Hours of noisy construction and demolition
 - 19) C2 - CMS Transport and EP&N requirements
 - 20) DC1 - Vehicle parking
 - 21) DC2 - Vehicle access, including markings for 'one way' system with access from The Meadway and exit via Keswick Close
 - 22) DC3 - Bicycle parking
 - 23) DC7 - Refuse and recycling
 - 24) Car Park Management Plan - In accordance with approved.
 - 25) Travel Plan - in accordance with approved.
 - 26) DC19 - Annual Travel Plan
 - 27) DC24 - EV Charging points
 - 28) PD5 - Use of roof

- 29) PD8 - Use restriction: ie no other D1 and maximum of 328 persons
- 30) PD3 - Obscure glazing to be implemented and retained.
- 31) Ancillary café use

Informatives:

- IF5 - Terms & Conditions
- IF6 - Building Control
- IF3 - Highways
- IF2 - Pre-commencement
- IF7 - Complaints about construction& demolition noise and dust
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- IF1- Positive and proactive

Other plans reviewed during the course of the application are as follows:

Received 10th May 2019, unless otherwise stated:

- Location Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/100, received 24th June 2019
- Existing Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/111 (does not show first floor office)
- Existing Elevation - Drawing no: TGR.18/110
- Ground Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/200 Rev E
- First Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/201 Rev C
- First Floor Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/201 Rev D, received 11th July 2019
- Second Floor Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/202 Rev C
- Elevations as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/205 Rev H
- Elevations as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/205 Rev J, received 11th July 2019
- Site Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/250 Rev G
- Site Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/250 Rev H, received 11th July 2019
- Site Plan [Proposed] - Drawing no: TGR.18/250 Rev L, received 16th September 2019
- Longitudinal Sections as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/260
- 3D Aerial North West as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/270
- 3D Aerial South East as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/271
- 3D North West Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/272
- South East Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/273
- North East Façade as Proposed RIBA Stage D - Drawing no: TGR.18/274
- First Floor Plan in Context/Views - Drawing no: TGR.18/255, received 4th September 2019
- Second Floor Plan in Context/Views - Drawing no: TGR.18/256, received 4th September 2019
- Main Entrance as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/275, received 4th September 2019
- View From Keswick Cl as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/276, received 4th September 2019
- Planting Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev A
- Planting Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev C, received 16th September 2019
- Hard Landscape Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev A
- Hard Landscape Plan - Drawing no: HBA/810/01 Rev C, received 16th September 2019
- Materials Palette - [no drawing number]
- Arboricultural Report, Document no: J027 - Arb Report - V1.1, dated 13/9/18, prepared by Sylvan Ecology
- Arboricultural Report, Document no: J027 - Arb Report - V1.2, dated 11/7/19, prepared by Sylvan Ecology, received 12th July 2019
- Bat Emergence Survey, ref: R2300/a, dated August 2019, prepared by John Wenman, received 12th August 2019

- BREEAM 2019 Pre-Assessment, dated 20/9/18, prepared by MES Building Solutions
- Design and Access Statement including Planning Statement, dated April 2019, Rev D, prepared by CPL Architects
- Design and Access Statement including Planning Statement, dated September 2019, Rev E, prepared by CPL Architects, received 10th September 2019
- Drainage Strategy, ref: A5737, dated 16/11/18, prepared by Ctp
- Existing Car Parking Analysis Plan - Drawing no: Drawing no: TGR.18/104, received 4th July 2019
- Footprint Comparison Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/251, received 13th August 2019
- Footprint Comparison Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/251 Rev A, received 5th September 2019
- Geosystems Cellweb Technical Specifications Package, received 17th July 2019
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Project no: P3208.1.0, dated 14/11/18, prepared by Agb Environmental
- Topographical Site Survey Plan - Drawing no: TGR.18/102, received 4th July 2019
- Longitudinal Sections as Proposed - Drawing no: TGR.18/260 Rev A, received 5th September 2019
- Transport Assessment, Ref: ref: HH4180484/DK/004 Issue 1, dated 8/4/19, prepared by Glanville, received 24th June 2019
- Transport Assessment, Ref: ref: HH4180484/DK/004 Issue 2, dated 2/7/19, prepared by Glanville, received 4th July 2019
- Transport Statement, Ref: HH4180484/DK/004 Issue 3, dated 18/9/19, prepared by Glanville, received 18th September 2019
- Transport Statement, Ref: HH4180484/DK/004 Issue 4, dated 8/10/19, prepared by Glanville, received 8th October 2019
- Response to Comments Received From Members of the Public, dated 9th September 2019, prepared by CPL Architects, received 10th September 2019