



553 Oxford Road, Reading

Design and Access Statement

Rev A - August 2018



3d perspective photo montage of the proposed development at the junction of Oxford Road and Wilson Road



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Design and Access Statement

1.00 Introduction

CPL Chartered Architects (CPL) has been appointed by The Trustees of 'The Gate', formerly Reading Community Church, to prepare a planning application for the land at 553 Oxford Road, known as Grovelands Chapel and The Gate Oxford Road Centre. Reading Community Church was formed in 2005 as a merger of two different Christian Fellowships – The Tilehurst Free Church and Grovelands Christian Fellowship.

The church obtained planning consent on 8 April 2013 to redevelop the site (ref: 12/01577/FUL). The consented scheme involved the demolition of the existing church buildings and construction of a new 3 storey church building to accommodate worship/meeting rooms, offices, cafe, and 2 retail shop units as well as residential accommodation, comprising 1x one bedroom flat, 1x two bedroom flat and 1x Studio flat.

Since obtaining the above consent, the leadership of the Gate has embarked on a strategic review of their buildings across several sites. The Gate now holds its Sunday services at 384 The Meadway, located approximately 2km west of 553 Oxford Road. The church's aim is that a central core facility is provided on the Meadway site and the design of a new church building is underway and will provide seating for a minimum of 400 together with meeting rooms, offices and ancillary accommodation. With such a sizable community building proposed for the Meadway site, the Oxford Road site can be redeveloped to retain community use space as well as creating new residential development to help meet Reading's housing needs. If planning consent is granted for the proposed development at Oxford Road, the proceeds will help the Church to maintain its community presence at Oxford Road, through the provision of a new nursery and managed flexible community halls, as well as help fund the proposed building works at the Meadway site. Both sites will provide significant community assets to serve the local communities for years to come.

The Gate Oxford Rd Centre is currently used as a resource centre for hosting church groups and other events.

1.01 Recent Planning History

A planning application was submitted in July 2017 (ref: 171086/FUL) which was refused at planning committee in February 2018. The proposals provided community space as well as twelve apartments arranged over four storeys. Following the planning committee, CPL engaged with Reading Borough Council (RBC) to agree what would be required to gain planning consent whilst also meeting the church's brief to redevelop the site for community and residential use. It was agreed that the loss of the historic building could be justified provided that the replacement building:

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



1.02 Pre-application Engagement

As 'quality of design' and 'appearance' can be subjective terms, CPL proposed to engage extensively with RBC at pre-application stage to agree design principles. Significant day-to-day engagement and correspondence has taken place in addition to the following key events:

Pre-application meetings with RBC on 16 April 2018 and 18 July 2018

Presentation to the Design Review Panel on 7 June 2018 (subsequent amended designs issued by email)

Public Consultation Event on 18 July 2018

In addition, the principles of the car parking and affordable housing strategy were agreed at pre-application stage through liaison with RBC's Housing and Transport teams.

Detail of the design development process with reference to feedback from RBC and the Design Review Panel is included in later sections of this document.

1.03 Public Consultation Event

A public consultation event was held on 18 July between the hours of 3.30pm and 7.30pm. The event was held on site at Grovelands Chapel. Amongst other benefits, the choice of venue helped attendees to appreciate the condition of the building interior, which has multiple building fabric issues and contains very few original Victorian features, and why refurbishment is not a sustainable or cost effective solution.

Invitations were delivered to four hundred properties in the surrounding streets. In addition, the church personally invited (by letter) all those who had objected to the previous 2017 planning application who live in other parts of Reading. All previous objectors were therefore invited to see how the design team had addressed concerns previously raised and to share their views, which could be discussed in person with representatives from the church and the design team. Local Councillors were also invited to the event as was Reading Civic Society, to whom the Church is most grateful for their attendance and positive engagement.

The latest designs were presented as well as drawings of the refused planning application so that attendees could see how the designs had changed and how previous concerns had been addressed.



Photograph from the public consultation event in July 2018



1.04 Feedback from the Public Consultation Event

As well as discussing the proposals and any concerns with representatives from the Church and design team, attendees were also encouraged to complete feedback forms which listed the following questions:

1. Do you have any comments on the proposals?
2. Are there any aspects of the design you think should be addressed?
3. Do you think any issues may arise from the proposals?

The feedback forms were collated following the event and comments taken into consideration as part of the design process of finalising the proposals. Below is a summary of comments received.

Recurrent Comments

1. The revised design is a significant improvement over the previous design
2. The revised design and materials are more in keeping with the street and area
3. It is positive that the parking strategy has been agreed with RBC
4. The square tower works well
5. Could the church bell be refurbished and incorporated in the design?
6. Some concern regarding traffic generation and parking
7. The 'mirroring' of existing chapel features works well

One-off other Comments

1. Preference for the proposed gable arrangement over dormers
2. Consider privacy of first floor living rooms from passing buses
3. Could the stained glass be re-used?
4. Could more colour in materials be incorporated?
5. Consider refuse storage
6. Preference for the chapel not to be demolished
7. Could chapel facade be partially retained?
8. Air pollution
9. Ensure cars don't reverse onto Wilson Road
10. Safety of pedestrians from vehicle movements

In response to comments received from the public, the planning submission includes the following:

1. the existing bell tower is to be refurbished and incorporated into the corner tower design
2. reference to existing church features used as a concept in the final design
3. Transport Statement includes assessment of traffic generation and impacts
4. Transport Statement has been revised to set out revised parking strategy as agreed with RBC
5. Of the elevation options considered, the 'gables' option was developed not the 'dormers' option
6. Refuse store access and size revised
7. Air Quality Assessment included with planning application
8. Car park design avoids the need to reverse onto Wilson Road
9. Car visibility splay diagrams (for highway safety) included in Transport Statement
10. Contrasting red brick colours emphasized in final design



2.00 Site Context

The development site for this planning application is located to the West of Reading town centre on the South side of the Oxford Road, (A329) at its junction with Wilson Road. The site is within the Oxford Road West District Centre.

The main existing building on the site is a late nineteenth century chapel (Grovelands Chapel) of 315m² gross internal floor area which includes some lean-to ancillary buildings to the rear. The site also contains a small hall in the south-east corner measuring 55m² in gross internal floor area. To the rear of the chapel is a parking courtyard, accessible off Wilson Road.

The development site is bounded by Oxford Road to the north, Wilson Road to the west, a former (recently demolished) commercial workshop/warehouse to the south where three new dwellings have recently been constructed and a terrace of mixed use properties to the east featuring commercial units at ground floor level with residential accommodation above.

On the opposite side of Wilson Road is the vacant plot of land; 2-4 Wilson Road. This land is also owned by the church and is currently used for car parking. The site at Wilson Road is subject to a separate planning application for residential use as it is no longer required for church car parking.



The existing Victorian Chapel at the junction of Oxford Road and Wilson Road

The locality is dominated by the busy Oxford Road which is a key arterial road into Reading. The surrounding streets typically contain Victorian terraced housing but there are a number of large commercial and religious buildings on Oxford Road, some of which are described below. On Oxford Road itself, many of the Victorian properties contain commercial property at ground floor level with residential use above. Other notable nearby sites include Brock Barracks to the immediate west of Wilson Road, Battle Library further east along Oxford Road and a large modern commercial development, including a Tesco Extra east of Battle Library, built on the former Battle Hospital site.

Emmanuel Methodist Church is a large modern worship space located behind Battle Library which replaced the former Methodist Chapel, constructed in 1905. The locality is also home to the Abu Bakr Islamic Centre and Mosque, a very large modern building recently constructed at 330 Oxford Road.



Battle Library, Oxford Road



Abu Bakr Islamic Centre and Mosque, 330 Oxford Road

2.01 Architectural Context

Due to the local vernacular being Victorian terraced housing and the Victorian Chapel having a significant presence in the Oxford Road street scene, it was deemed appropriate that any new building should make reference and respond positively to the Victorian architectural style. This concept was agreed at the outset with RBC and formed the basis for further exploration of architectural form, geometry, proportion and materiality as demonstrated later in this document.



3.00 Amount of development

The site area measures 824m². The existing church buildings are single storey and provide 370m² of internal floor area (chapel 315m², hall 55m²). In order to make sustainable and efficient use of this well located and accessible urban site, the new proposal is mixed use (community and residential) and is arranged over three floors, providing a total gross internal floor area of 1196m².

3.01 Community Use

The new development is comprised of community use at ground floor level measuring 350m² in gross internal floor area (GIA). This technically represents a very small decrease in community space compared with the current building (20m²). However, in practise, usable floor space has been increased through more efficient space planning and storage. Furthermore, the current building is in a poor state of repair, is not energy efficient and not all of the floor area is accessible for community use. In contrast, the new community space will be a modern, sustainable, accessible and flexible building. The design of the community space has a flexible layout, with sliding folding partitions, enabling the size of spaces to be controlled to suit end user needs and to accommodate several small groups using the space concurrently or one larger group. In addition to the three hall spaces, an entrance foyer/cafe area provides a welcoming main entrance/hub and is served by a kitchen.

The church will manage the community use space which will be available for various community groups and activities. A nursery is to be provided (utilising halls 1 and 2) catering for up to 24 two-four year olds at any one time. A new outdoor soft play area for the nursery is proposed and this is screened from the car park. There will be a maximum of four full time equivalent staff at the nursery. The Church also intends to run a community cafe in the foyer space. The church has a history of engagement and partnership with a range of local initiatives and intends to maintain such partnerships wherever possible. The church currently runs the below regular activities across various locations:

1. 9am Prayer Service
2. 11am Family Service
3. Connect Groups – weekly groups for friendship and engagement with church life
4. Life Groups – monthly groups encouraging participation from friends and family both inside and outside the church family (these include Book Club, Card Making, and Sport and Art groups)
5. Youth Groups – held weekly on Mondays and Wednesday for school years 7-13
6. Kids Work, Calcot – weekly term-time primary school age group for children and their families at the Empress Road Centre
7. Friendship Hour – twice monthly friendship group for senior citizens

For many years the church has invested and continues to invest in Reading through various initiatives birthed by and/or supported by the Church. These include:

1. Yeldall Manor - a rehabilitation facility for addicts
2. The Mustard Tree - includes 'Rehab', providing protection against sexual exploitation and 'Engage', an elderly befriending scheme.
3. Acorns Nursery Calcot - run by the Church's social outreach arm 'Love your Community'.
4. The church also supports TLG, a Christian charity that works with young people who have been excluded from school, at risk of exclusion or are at crisis point in their education.



3.02 Residential Use

The residential component is located above the community space and is arranged over two floors. The development will provide ten modern and sustainable new homes, three of which will provide affordable housing to meet the policy requirement for 30% on-site provision.

For further detail regarding affordable housing provision, reference should be made to the submitted affordable housing statement.

All of the apartments exceed national recommended minimum space standards and all apartments comply with 'Lifetime Homes' standards as it is good practice to ensure that dwellings can be adapted over time to suit the physical needs of the occupants.

Schedule of Accommodation:

Ground Floor

Community Use: 350m²
+ 20m² circulation and storage space at entrance to flat block

First Floor

Flat 1 (2b3p): 61m ²	(Affordable unit)
Flat 2 (1b2p): 50m ²	(Affordable unit)
Flat 3 (2b4p): 70m ²	
Flat 4 (2b4p): 75m ²	
Flat 5 (3b6p): 100m ²	(Affordable unit)

Second Floor

Flat 6 (2b3p): 61m ²
Flat 7 (1b2p): 50m ²
Flat 8 (2b4p): 70m ²
Flat 9 (2b4p): 75m ²
Flat 10 (3b6p): 100m ²

The layout of the proposed design has taken into consideration a number of factors outlined below.

The proposed building is L-shaped in plan with the building fronting onto the back of the public footpaths on Oxford Road and Wilson Road. This addresses the street scene by making the principle facades visible to the public realm whilst enabling the area at the rear of the building to be used for car parking and refuse/recycling storage, an area which is hidden from view to Oxford Road. This ensures that the 'service' areas are not visible from the main street frontage. The building line broadly follows the line of the existing terrace on Oxford Road but steps out slightly on the corner to accentuate the tower, with reference to the existing church tower design.



Proposed ground floor plan showing community space, outdoor nursery play area, screened car park and new planting

As noted above, it is important that the main elevation addresses Oxford Road. This results in a principle facade which faces north. It is also important to maximise solar gain and reduce energy consumption for heating. However, due to concerns raised in the previous planning application, where south facing living spaces were deemed to cause loss of privacy to neighbouring properties, the design features all living spaces facing either Oxford Road or Wilson Road.

As explained above, loss of privacy to neighbouring properties is to be avoided. Therefore the layout has been carefully designed to provide living rooms and balconies which only face the street, rather than back gardens of neighbouring residential properties. It is generally accepted that bedrooms



and bathroom windows can overlook neighbouring gardens without significant loss of privacy, as is the case in most terraced housing design and along Oxford Road and Wilson Road as existing. Therefore only bedroom windows are positioned on the rear elevations and the windows are modestly sized so as to avoid a perceived loss of privacy to existing residents.

In terms of privacy for the future residents of the proposed building, and with reference to concerns raised at the public consultation event regarding privacy from passing buses, the living rooms/balconies have been designed with perforated metal balustrades which allow diffuse light to penetrate whilst obscuring views into living rooms.



Proposed 1st Floor Plan (2nd Floor is identical) showing living rooms facing the street and bedrooms to the rear

4.04 Parking/Service Access

The new car park is located to the rear of the building so as not to adversely affect the Oxford Road street scene. Car parking and cycle parking provision for the dwellings and community space has been addressed as part of a Transport Statement prepared by The Glanville Group and is shown on the proposed ground floor plan. 11 car parking spaces are proposed, 7 of which are for use by the community facilities. Additional resident car parking for the Oxford Road development is to be provided on the land opposite at 2-4 Wilson Road. Details of the Wilson Road development are viewable online using the council's planning register and searching the application reference number 171078. The car parking arrangement will be secured by planning condition as agreed with RBC.

On street car parking in the area is of great concern to local residents. In order to address concerns transport specialists have been engaged by the church to assess the car parking requirements of the proposed developed and the impact it will have on on-street car parking. The design team has liaised extensively with RBC Transport Team to agree an acceptable car parking strategy which complies with planning policy whilst not adversely affecting parking issues in the area. For full



details, reference should be made to the Transport Statement prepared by The Glanville Group and submitted with this planning application.

The car park contains a number of disabled parking bays. For ease of access for those with limited mobility or requiring assistance, a secondary entrance to the community space has been provided directly off the car park.

A new covered refuse and recycling store has been provided to the rear of the building. This is located next to the public highway to provide ease of access by the collection service vehicles and operatives.

4.05 Internal Layout (Community)

As noted in section 3.01, the design of the community space has a flexible layout, with sliding folding partitions, enabling the size of spaces to be controlled to suit end user needs and a multitude of potential community groups and activities. In addition to the three hall spaces, an entrance foyer/cafe area provides a welcoming main entrance/hub and is served by a kitchen. The ground floor area also enables use of the three halls as one large hall with the foyer acting as circulation and means of escape. The nursery has been provided with storage to enable equipment to be cleared away if necessary. The nursery will make use of Halls 1 and 2. The circulation and access design enables Hall 3 and the foyer / drop-in cafe area to be used in parallel to the nursery.

Two kitchens have been provided, one to serve the foyer/cafe space and one to serve the nursery space. Staff, storage and WC accommodation has been provided, including a fully accessible WC accessed from the entrance foyer.

The nursery has access (via electro-magnetically hold open doors) to a children's WC/washroom area as well as to an external, partially covered soft play area at ground floor level.

4.06 Internal Layout (Residential)

The apartments are all served by a central common stair and lift core. Protected lobbies provide fire and smoke separation in line with the requirements of the Building Regulations. Apartment plans have been efficiently designed to minimise circulation space and to provide generously sized living spaces and bedrooms. All dwellings comply with 'Lifetime Homes' standards and exceed national recommendations and council guidance for minimum space standards.

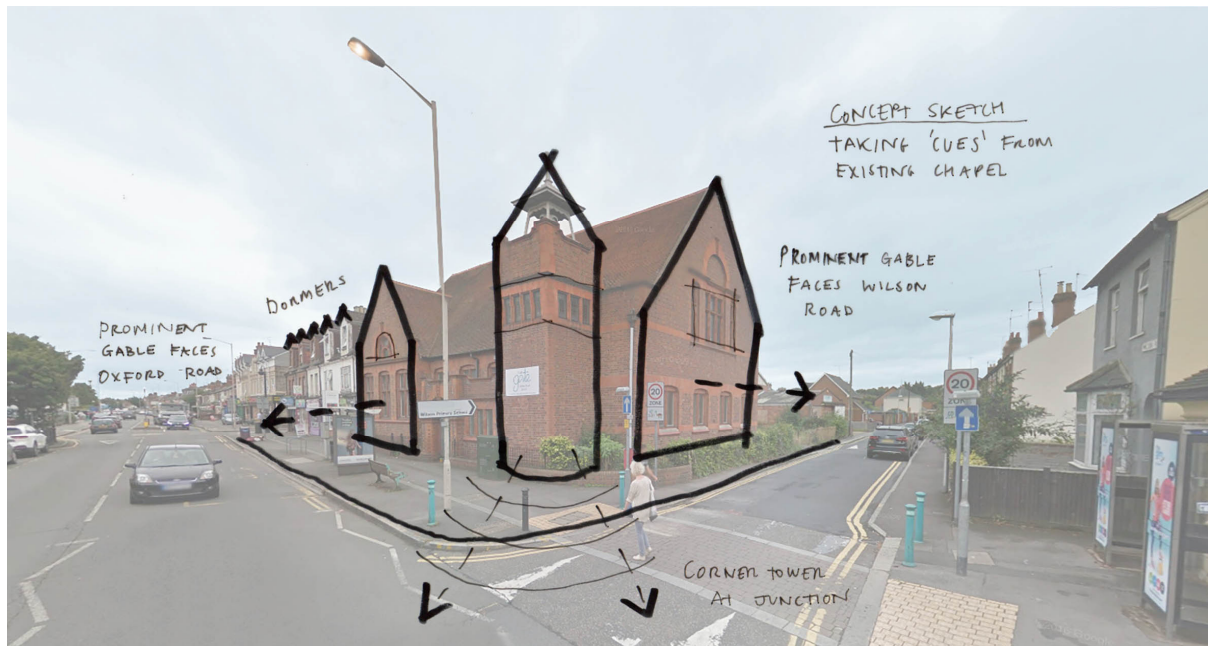
5.00 Scale

As is currently the case with the existing church building, corner sites often command buildings which are of a greater height than the adjacent terraced properties. In urban design terms, this is considered good practice, assists with way-finding and creates visual interest and variety in the streetscape. It also focuses denser development where it is most appropriate. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that new development is not overbearing or un-neighbourly.

The proposed development is shorter in height than the existing church building as well as being shorter than the previous planning consent scheme by others (ref: 12/01577/FUL).



As part of the design development process for this planning application, the existing buildings on site and the adjacent buildings along Wilson and Oxford Road have measured and drawn in detail by a specialist land and building surveyor. This has ensured that the design drawings accurately portray the relationship of the proposals to the surrounding context. The survey information also enables the outlines of the existing church buildings (to be demolished) to be indicated on the proposed elevation drawings for comparison of scale.



Concept sketch exploring how the proposed design might make reference to key features of the existing chapel

Due to concerns previously raised by RBC in connection with the 2017 planning application, the scale, massing and proportions of the proposed building have undergone extensive design development with significant engagement with RBC and the Design Review Panel. The below images help to articulate the way that the design has developed, starting with the 2017 planning design through to the final revised planning design.

2014 Preliminary Sketch Option 2 (single gables)

EXISTING CHURCH OUTLINE

PREVIOUS CPL PLANNING PROPOSAL OUTLINE

WILSON ROAD

[illegible]

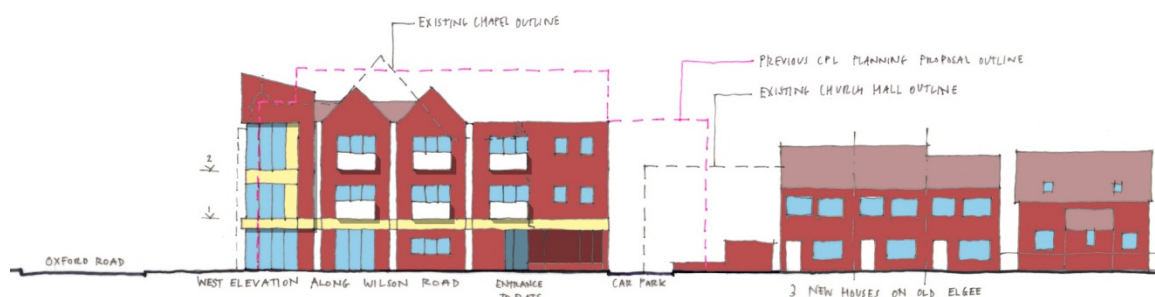
2018 Planning Design (small gables, square tower and retained bell)



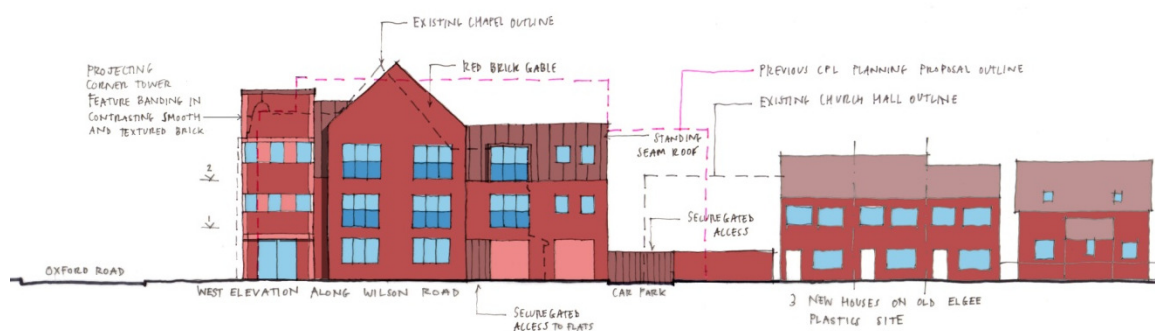
Wilson Road Elevation Design Development



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



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



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



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



6.0 Appearance

6.01 Impact on the Street scene

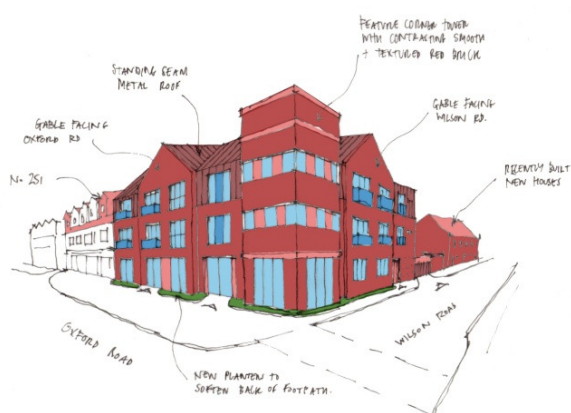
With Oxford Road being one of the key roads into Reading town centre it is important that the proposals have a distinctive presence (as does the chapel) and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the area. The design development has been informed by a 3d exploration of form, mass and proportion. The below images indicate how the design has developed, focusing on the view as seen at the junction of Oxford Road and Wilson Road, starting with the 2017 planning design through to the final revised planning design.



2017 Planning application design



2018 Preliminary Sketch Option 1



2018 Preliminary Sketch Option 3



2018 Planning application design



6.02 Materials

In addition to the scale, geometry and proportions, the choice of materials has a key role to play in terms of the appearance of the building. Reference has been made to the local vernacular building style - the Victorian terraced house, as well as to Grovelands Chapel.

The nearby Victorian terraces are predominantly faced with clay brickwork. Grey slate is the predominant roofing material although many properties, including the chapel, feature clay tiles. Houses and civic buildings, such as the nearby Battle Library make use of contrasting brickwork textures and colours and/or stonework and brickwork.



Victorian terrace opposite the development site showing red brickwork with buff brick features



Battle Library, Oxford Road

It is therefore appropriate that the new development is clad in clay facing brickwork with contrasting red brickwork. Depth and texture have been added to the proposed facade by a mixture of brick bonds and through the use of projecting brick banding and header courses. High quality brick detailing will add to the overall quality of the building whilst providing visual interest, contrast and a modern interpretation of the brick detailing seen in Victorian architecture.

Instead of slates and tiles, the roof is proposed to be clad in standing seam zinc. Grey metal roof is typical of a traditional chapel building but also fits well with the tone and colour of slate roofs on surrounding properties. A metal roof has been chosen instead of slate as it offers greater flexibility

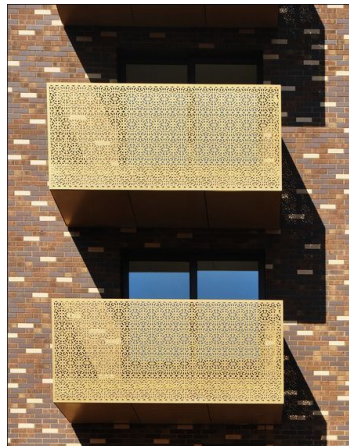


in achieving the roof geometry, is not constrained by roof pitch and is a high quality, durable and low maintenance material.

Below are examples of precedent buildings which have been referred to as reference images and are indicative of the approach to material workmanship and detail intended for the development.



Girton College Cambridge
Allies and Morrison



St Andrews Block B Bromley by Bow
Maccreanor Lavington



Stepped brickwork as proposed for
corner tower



Crisply detailed modern red brick gable



Example of standing seam zinc roof

7.00 Landscape and Ecology

The landscaping works are minimal and are limited to areas of hard standing for the new car park and new brick built planters within the car park area and along Oxford and Wilson Road so as to improve the site's ecological value. The existing site contains limited poor quality shrubbery.

Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) proposals for the site will need to be developed in detail following any planning approval. Establishing a suitable SUDs proposal requires extensive ground tests to determine an appropriate strategy which is suited to site conditions. However, it is clear that a soak-away is unlikely to be suitable due to site constraints and proximity of the new car park to the proposed buildings and existing adjacent buildings. It is considered that the most practical form of sustainable drainage will be storm water storage tanks which would store surface water on site (below the car park) and would be connected to a flow control manhole which releases water



back into the public sewer at a restricted rate so as to limit the load on the public sewer. This would reduce the load on the public sewer, compared to existing.

Submission of detailed SUDs designs for approval will be secured by planning condition and a detailed SUDs proposal will be developed by a civil engineer, following any planning approval, with capacities and flow rates to be agreed with the Statutory Authority.

The pre-application advice received stated that no specific ecological/ landscape concerns have been raised. The site has minimal ecological value. However, an up to date bat survey is required and has been submitted with the application.

8.0 Sustainability

The applicant has engaged sustainability consultant MES Building Solutions (MES) to assist the design team in ensuring that the proposed development meets the Council's policies on sustainable design and construction. Details of compliance can be seen in the Sustainability Statement and Energy Statement prepared by MES and submitted as part of the application.

BREEAM is part of The Code for a Sustainable Built Environment which is a strategic international framework for sustainability assessment of the built environment. The community use element of the development will achieve the sustainability rating of BREEAM 'Very Good' in accordance with council policy for a space of this size and use. A BREEAM pre-assessment has been submitted with this application to demonstrate how compliance could be achieved.

The Council's sustainability policy requirements for new residential development refer to The Code for Sustainable Homes standards which were recently withdrawn by the government. The design team has liaised with the council to establish what sustainability credentials are required for new residential development and the Sustainability Statement supporting this application is based on the advice received.

The scheme design employs a 'fabric first' approach which will achieve a sustainable building based on good thermal performance of walls, floors, roofs and glazing which, coupled with good levels of air tightness, will ensure that the development minimises carbon emissions and ongoing fuel consumption once in use. Roof mounted solar photo-voltaic panels will generate on site renewable electricity and will offset carbon emissions in line with council policy on zero carbon technologies and carbon emissions offsets. Access for maintenance will be provided by roof hatch.

9.00 Access

9.01 Vehicular Access and Parking

Reference should be made to the Transport Assessment prepared by the Glanville Group and submitted as part of this application. Vehicular access to the site remains similar to existing but the car park entrance has been moved slightly further from Oxford Road. Access to the building entrances from car parking is level or gently sloping. Disabled parking bays are provided close to the main entrance to the stair core and the adjacent secondary access to the community spaces.

9.02 Vertical Access



A single common stair is provided inside the building. This complies with the requirements of Approved Documents K and M in terms of number of risers in flights and the riser height and going length such that the stairs are accessible for ambulant disabled users. In addition a passenger lift has been provided in the circulation core so as to provide access to all floors of the building for those of limited mobility and for the benefit and convenience of occupants and end users.

9.03 Horizontal Access

The development site is generally flat and therefore the approaches to all entrances from the public footpaths and from the car parking areas are all level or gently sloping. Level access will also be provided in the form of compliant external door thresholds to ensure that a maximum 15mm up-stand is incorporated so as not to impede wheelchair users.

Internally, corridor widths, lobby sizes and clear widths through doors have all been designed to meet or exceed the minimum dimensions set out in Approved Document Part M and additionally for compliance with the Lifetime Homes Standards for the new dwellings.

9.04 Lifetime Homes Standards

The Lifetime Homes Standards were formed because of concerns about how inaccessible and inconvenient many homes are for large sections of the population. Lifetime Homes was developed to ensure that new homes are accessible, inclusive and adaptable so that when a resident's physical needs change, their home has a better chance of being adapted to suit their needs thus reducing the likelihood of them having to move home. The 16 criteria of Lifetime Homes have all been met for all of the proposed new dwellings in line with council policy DM5.



Appendix

Design Review Panel Comments and how these have been addressed

This appendix summarises the comments received from the Design Review Panel and how these have been addressed in the final design.

Comment: ‘The relationship of the ground floor fenestration, where the design also used the same glazing layout to give emphasis on the corner, which is confusing but also problematic for the small residential units on the first and second floor.’

Fenestration has been redesigned with a different window arrangement on the corner to emphasise the tower and reflect the ‘punched windows’ of the existing chapel tower

Comment: (review) ‘The access to the carpark and flats.’

Security concerns raised by the DRP in connection with the car park / access to flats have been addressed with the provision of secure gated access for pedestrians and cars. It is suggested that the car park gates could be on hold open during normal operational hours so as to grant easy access to parking for users of the community space. For off peak times, when the security is arguably more of a concern, the gates will be operated by residents (by fob) and staff of the community building. Clearly the exact operational arrangements will need to be determined at a later date.

Comment: ‘Lack of clear public realm space for the ground floor community uses’.

The proposed building broadly follows the existing Oxford Road terrace building line but with a slight change of angle (as has the chapel) which creates small public realm spaces in the form of new planting and waiting areas off the back of footpath near entrances. Benching is proposed by the main entrance.

Comment: ‘The ground floor community spaces are currently designed to look like the small scale retail.’

The previous (refused) scheme design was criticized by the previous DRP for creating a distinction between the two uses, community and residential, a comment referenced as salient in the panel report this time round and quoted stating that the new design should provide an *‘architecture that ties the two uses in the building together to form a holistic approach to the design, rather than trying to apply a clear definition between the two.’* There is a balance to be struck between distinction and cohesion and we have been mindful of giving clear distinction to the tower and gables. This is achieved by providing a simple and rhythmic facade to the rest of the facade. The fenestration widths from the flats continue down to ground floor but a subtle distinction between the two uses is created by use of contrasting texture/colour of brickwork to the ground floor. Unlike a commercial development, residential scale windows for the nursery are appropriate due to a requirement to create some sense of privacy with regard to views in from the public footpath.

Comment: ‘Lack of articulation in form, e.g. the corner could step in or out from the rest of the building-line, similar to the original chapel’



The tower form is articulated and the tower steps out from the rest of the facade. The Wilson Road gable is also expressed with a slight step out to be detailed using a 100mm projecting brickwork, a more subtle projection compared to the tower which is to be more prominent in terms of hierarchy of form (see below comment on hierarchy)

Comment: 'The low level glazing to the prominent corner of the residential spaces which will be challenging to resolve effectively in construction to avoid potential distraction on the elevation by belongings'

Standard window sill height now proposed on corner tower. This is also reflective of the 'punched windows' of the existing tower.

Comment (by email):

(the design is) **'lacking in hierarchy between the elements. Perhaps the Oxford Road gable is not required, and go with the dormer precedent for this. i.e. 1 eaves, 1 gable, 1 tower. What is the most important? Could the massing be a little calmer then, the details can embellish and develop the contrast between the elements'**

CPL proposed the below hierarchy of form for the final design.

- 1) The corner tower now takes precedence. It has been increased in height and the other features made more subservient. We propose the retention and re-use of the existing Grovelands Chapel bell as a feature and historical reference, a concept widely discussed with and supported by neighbours and the Reading Civic Society at the public consultation event on 18 July)
- 2) The large gable proposed on Wilson Road refers to the existing chapel gable which has a strong presence when entering Reading along Oxford Road from the west.
- 3) Rhythm of smaller gables on Oxford Road. Small gables, rather than dormers, are considered more consistent with the overall architectural language of the proposed building (and the chapel) and are reflective of the existing terrace along Oxford Road. We propose a strong eaves line, as suggested by the DRP, emphasized by a contrast between red brick and standing seam zinc roof finish.