

## DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

**Ward:** Norcot

**App Ref:** 231433/FUL

**Address:** Grovelands Baptist Church, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HJ

**Proposals:** Single Storey extension and connection between existing Church and existing Church Hall with refurbishment of and rooflight to existing basement.

**Case Officer:** Sian Hickey

**Date received (valid from):** 9 October 2023

**Decision date (ext):** 06 November 2024

### 1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site consists of a pitched roof property, known as Grovelands Baptist Church. It has been on the Council's list of locally listed buildings (LL12) since 23 November 2018. The property is attached to a row of terraced properties, located on the corner of Wilson Road and Oxford Road, with access off Wilson Road. There is a car park at the rear with a detached single storey hall building. The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential properties. The application site does not fall within a conservation area.

**Site visit date:** 07/11/2023

**Site visit photos:**



### 2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The amended proposal is for a single storey rear extension to connect the main existing church building to the existing detached church hall building. The extension would have a pitched roof with a small section of flat roof. The enclosed staircase to the existing basement would remain behind the proposed the extension. The proposal also includes adding a new rooflight over the existing basement.

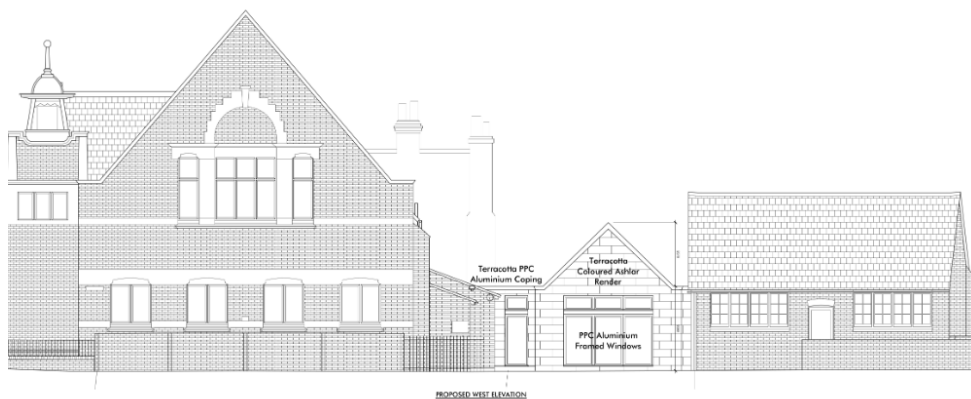
Plans/documents considered:

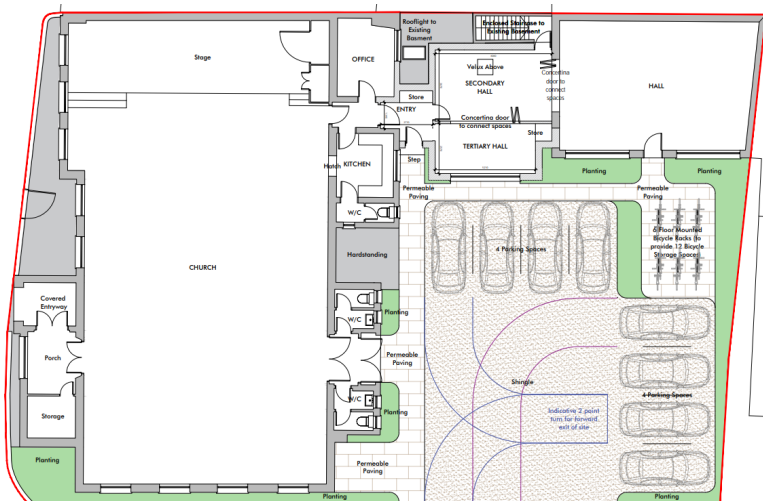
Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.01 – Existing Ground Floor Plan received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.02 – Existing Roof Plan received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.10 – Existing North Elevation received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.11 – Existing West Elevation received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.12 – Existing South Elevation received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.13 – Existing East Elevation received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.20 – Existing Site Plan received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
 Location Plan received 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
 Noise Impact Assessment rev C received 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
 Design and Access Statement received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.P.01 B – Proposed Ground Floor Plan received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.P.02 B – Proposed Roof Plan received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.P.10 B – Proposed North Elevation received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.P.11 B – Proposed West Elevation received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.P.12 B – Proposed South Elevation received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.E.13 B – Proposed East Elevation received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Drawing No. 2.VCR.P.20 C – Proposed Ground Site Plan received 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
 Doc ref BauderEXTENSIVELIGHTWEIGHTsedium – green roof details received 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024





### 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

240440 - Single Storey Rear extension to existing Church Kitchen and new Porch Door. PERMITTED

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

551A Oxford Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 1HJ  
 549 Oxford Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 1HJ  
 2 Wilson Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2RN  
 6 Wilson Road, Reading, RG30 2RN  
 549a Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HJ  
 551 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HJ  
 2 Wantage Road, Reading, RG30 2SE  
 551B Oxford Road, RG30 1HJ  
 3 Factory Place, Wilson Road, RG30 2RS  
 4 Wilson Road, Reading, RG30 2RN

Letters of objection have been received from neighbouring properties with concerns that noise and antisocial behaviour issues would increase with the proposal.

### RBC Environmental Protection

The Environmental Health officer had concerns regarding noise arising from the development and the original noise impact assessment submitted. Subsequently, a revised noise impact assessment was submitted which the environmental health officer confirmed was acceptable, however, as the information submitted did not mention ventilation there was still a concern that the break out noise may not comply with the levels in the assessment if the windows will need to be opened for ventilation. The Acoustic Report was updated again, following the proposed strategy of fixing all proposed windows and using trickle vents, using existing Air Conditioning Units and opening of internal doors to ensure noise from the Church and Hall extension is minimised.

The environmental health officer confirmed the above is acceptable subject to the assessment being conditioned.

### **RBC Transport**

*The site is located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD.*

*Application seeks to construct a single storey building linking the Church and the existing hall. The church is located on the corner of Wilson Rd and Oxford Road. Wilson Road is subject to no entry from the south. The carriageway is narrow and is reduced to single lane by on street parking and double yellow lines. The Councils residential parking permit scheme also operates in the area.*

*The site currently benefits from on site parking accessed via Wilson Rd, based on the existing floor space of 500.6sqm, 25 parking spaces would be required in accordance with current standards, however images show that the parking is not formally laid out i.e. no identifiable parking bays. The application form states there is currently parking for 8 vehicles.*

*Application states the net additional gross internal floorspace following development will be 56.2sqm. Policy TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.*

*In order to fully assess the proposals, additional information should be submitted including;*

- Days, time, congregation number of proposed usage of the hall*
- Is the hall to be used for another use by any other groups*

*The Highway Authority will need to be satisfied that existing on-site parking facilities can meet the needs of increased usage to ensure that the hall users are not forced to seek alternative parking locations for additional vehicles in an area where there is already competition of on street.*

*Cycle storage will need to be provided in accordance with the Councils standards at a ratio of 1 space per 50m<sup>2</sup> and will need to be illustrated on plans.*

**Officer note:** The agent submitted further details regarding the use, along with a revised block plan illustrating 8 vehicle parking spaces on site with indicative 2 point turn, and 12 bicycle storage spaces.

The Transport Officer confirmed the parking provision and arrangement is acceptable. No changes to the existing vehicle crossing are now proposed. It was advised to attach a condition to the permission to ensure the extension shall not be used at any time other than for purposes ancillary to church use for the operation of Sunday school known as Grovelands Church Oxford Rd.

### **RBC Conservation Officer**

#### **Relevant policies and legislation**

##### **National Planning Policy and Guidance:**

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2023) 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

Paragraph 203 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 209 of the NPPF requires that 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

National Planning Practice Guidance on Historic Environment, which provides context to the NPPF, also encourages identifying non-designated heritage assets. PPG states that "Plan-making bodies should make clear and up to date information on non-designated heritage assets accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers. This includes information on the criteria used to select non-designated heritage assets and information about the location of existing assets."

#### Local Planning Policy and Guidance:

Policy EN1 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment, which includes listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, historic parks and gardens, and other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

This policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, "Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits".

Policy EN4 'Locally Important Heritage Assets' of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that "Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.

Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality."

Policy EN6 'New development in a historic context' also requires "New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance."

#### Other:

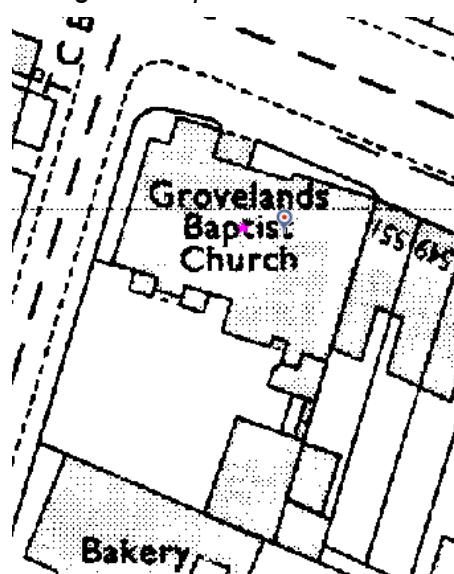
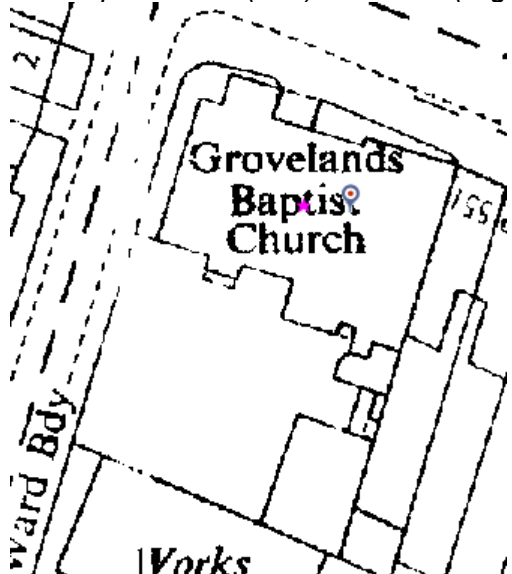
Historic England Advice Note 7 – Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage

**Impact Assessment - Objection due to the following reasons:**

- As stated within the official description of the listing, “The site comprises two buildings: main chapel of 1899 ... and a smaller hall to the south, probably built as a Sunday School. ...” . Although historic/original footprint of the building has been altered via some additions, the hierarchy and relationship of these two buildings are still legible. However the proposed new hall would project from the western building line of the existing hall by demolishing some historic fabric. Although the proposed roof form and materials can be considered acceptable, I think the internal layout, such as removal of the proposed toilet and entry can be an option, the ridge level of the proposed building should also be in line with the eaves level of the main building.



OS Maps of 1910 (Left) and 1938 (Right) show the original footprint



The Council's Historic Mapping Tool – the Application site in the 1950s (Left) and 1970s (Right) showing the rear and front extension

- The Aerial photograph of the site from 2002 notes that there have been alterations to the extensions, the most noticeable one is the replacement/renewal of roof tiles. It is also noted that due to the rear extensions to the ground floor the rear façade of the main building is mostly occupied by extensions. This, however does not mean that anything can be proposed to the rear elevation. For instance, another aerial photograph of the site (2021) shows that the remaining/ soft landscaping (hedges, etc.) was removed from the western boundary and a new hard surface was laid to the rear garden/courtyard, which resulted in further harm to the rear.



*Aerial photographs of 2002 and 2021*

- The proposed development also includes new parking arrangement in the rear courtyard for 8 cars, 9 bicycle racks and some landscaping (?) without any green or natural element. As such I find that the proposed works and uses to the rear courtyard is excessive. This used to be an open area shared by the church and school buildings serving them as a recreation space not a vehicle storage only. Similarly, adding separate toilets to the rear of the building shows no respect to the historic forms or original building lines of the heritage asset.

- It appears that the proposal lacks of giving attention to built-open space relationship, retention of any historic fabric or element, sustainable solutions (natural elements) that can enhance the significance of the building and its setting. For instance, the proposed ply membrane roof would be low quality, there should have been green roof, permeable grass paving system or vertical garden. However, the site is treated as any ordinary/modern plot. As such, I am unable to support the proposal due to its general approach to the existing building lines, masses, hierarchy of spaces, and excessive use of car park without addressing/solving any existing problem of the heritage asset (poor condition of courtyard without a natural element).

Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that new development proposals conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, take into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset and ensure new development is integrated into the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located under the advice in the Framework. In addition, the proposed development would conflict with paragraphs 203 and 209 of the NPPF.

**Officer note:** following the comments above a revised scheme was submitted. The key changes to the scheme include the introduction of more permeable paving and increased areas for planting and low-level vegetation across the site and car park. The originally proposed WC within the new extension has been removed, and the size of the tertiary hall in the new extension has been reduced. This adjustment has allowed the gable-end extension to project less prominently beyond the Church Hall, freeing up space for further planting and enhancing

the landscaping. Additionally, the original single-ply membrane flat roof across the proposal has been replaced with a sedum green roof, bordered by a pebble edging. The ridge height of the gable-ended extension has been lowered to sit below the eaves level of the main Church, ensuring that the new extension remains subservient to the historic structure.

The conservation officer reviewed the plans and details submitted and confirmed that the amendments are acceptable and that there are no further objections.

**Equality Act 2010:**

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

**5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

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 Policy and Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

**Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)**

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**SPD**

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

**Equality Act 2010:**

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## **APPRAISAL**

### **Character and Appearance**

**Policy CC7** states: All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

**Policy EN1** states: All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

**Policy EN4** states: Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.

The area behind the main church building within the site consists of hard standing for vehicle parking, minimal vegetation/green space, an external enclosure for the basement stairs, and an outbuilding facilitating a hall. The development proposes a single storey extension to link the main building to the existing outbuilding. The existing and proposed West Elevation plans submitted demonstrate that the proposed extension would sit comfortably within the existing site. The purpose of the development is to improve the existing facilities at the site. In terms of design, the proposed extension is considered suitable, and the materials proposed are considered acceptable. The eaves height of the proposed extension will be the same as the eaves height of the existing hall building, and the roof pitch of the proposed extension will reflect the roof design of the main church building. The proposed extension is considered to integrate well and would not detract from the existing character of the site.

Overall, the proposed development is considered acceptable and will improve the visual appearance of the existing gap and stairs enclosure between the main church building and the hall. The proposed development is significantly set back from the street and would therefore not cause any harm to the street scene or wider area. The design is considered sympathetic to the site's locally listed status. The development is, therefore, considered in accordance with Policies, CC7, EN1 and EN4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

### **Amenity**

Due to the single storey nature of the proposed extension, it is not considered that the proposal would cause significant detrimental harm to neighbouring amenity with regards to overbearing effects, loss of sunlight and daylight, or loss of privacy/overlooking. The proposal originally included a window in the rear elevation of the extension facing the garden of 550 Oxford Road. Following officer concerns, this window was removed and replaced with a Velux roof window instead. Although the proposed extension may cause a slight worsening to the rear amenity space of no.550, when balanced against the existing detriment the built form would increase privacy for these neighbouring residents. Furthermore, the use of the proposed extension is for the wider community and would be a benefit to many. The agent has confirmed that the proposed extension would be used as a Sunday school and as a community kitchen feeding people for charity. The use of the proposed extension would remain ancillary to the existing church, a condition is attached to this permission to ensure this use. A further condition is attached to ensure that the extension is not used by members of the public outside the hours

of 9-5 Monday-Saturday and 10-4 Sundays and Bank holidays to protect local residents from unreasonable disturbance arising from the use. The proposed windows will be fixed shut to further ensure that any noise arising from the extension is minimised.

Overall, the proposed development is considered in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

## **Conclusion**

The proposal has been assessed against the above policies and is considered to be in accordance with those policies.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### ***Approve***

### **Conditions**

Time limit  
Approved plans  
Materials  
Vehicle parking  
Bicycle parking  
Hours of use  
Ancillary use  
Construction Method Statement  
Noise assessment  
Landscaping