

Reference: 15/00549/FUL
Applicant: Mr Michael Miller
Location: St Christophers Church Hall 22 Moore Road Barwell
Proposal: Demolition of church hall and erection of 4 dwellings

RECOMMENDATION:- Refuse planning permission.

Introduction:-

This planning application is to be considered at Planning Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, as the Chief Planning & Development Officer in discussion with the Chair of the Planning Committee considers it necessary to be determined by the Planning Committee.

This application was reported to Planning Committee on 22 December 2015 where Members resolved to defer making a decision to allow a site visit to be carried out.

Application Proposal

This is a full application for the demolition of St Christopher's Church Hall, 22 Moor Road, Barwell and the erection of four three bedroomed semi-detached dwellings.

Two tandem parking spaces would be provided for each dwelling to the front of the proposed properties, accessed from Forest View Road for Plots 3-4 and Moore Road for Plots 1-2. There is currently no vehicle access to the site.

The Site and Surrounding Area

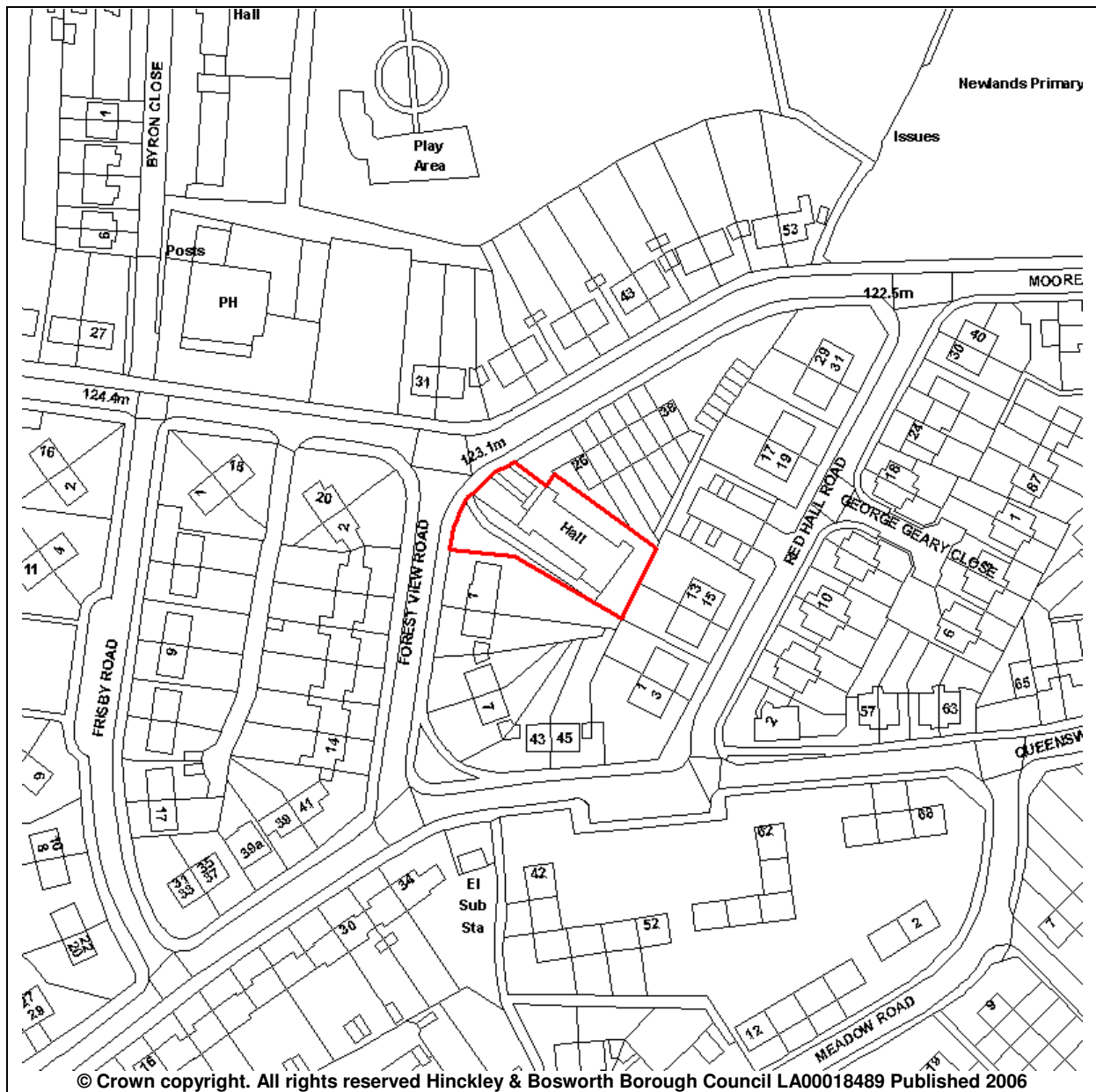
The site is within the settlement boundary of Barwell. It is located on the junction between Moore Road and Forest View Road.

St Christopher's Church Hall is a single storey building covering a large majority of the site. The building is currently vacant, has been for several years, and the surrounding land is overgrown.

The area is largely characterised by semi-detached dwellings set back into the site approximately 5/6 metres. To the north east of the site there are a row of seven terraced dwellings. These are uncharacteristic of the area in terms of their design, however they follow a similar set back distance from the highway of approximately 5 metres.

Relevant Planning History:-

None relevant.



Consultations:-

No objection from:-

- HBBC (Drainage)
- Street Scene Services (Waste)
- HBBC (Pollution)

Leicestershire County Council (Highways) have raised concerns in regards to the access due to the site being on a junction. It is requested that the parking spaces are moved to be accessed from Forest View Road, subject to this there are no objections subject to conditions.

Barwell Parish Council have objected to the application as the application form states 12 parking spaces are to be provided and the plans only indicated 8 and access are on a dangerous junction so there are highway safety issues.

Letters to notify neighbours were sent and no representations were received.

Policy:-

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2014

Hinckley & Bosworth Core Strategy 2009

Policy 3: Development in Barwell

Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan 2001

Policy RES5 - Residential Proposals on Unallocated Sites
Policy BE1 - Design and Siting of Development
Policy T5 - Highway Design and Vehicle Parking Standards
Policy CF2B - Alternative Uses of Existing Educational and Community Sites
Policy REC3 - New residential development - outdoor play space for children

Earl Shilton & Barwell Area Action Plan 2014

Policy 21: Infrastructure & Delivery
Policy 22: Development & Design
Policy 24: Safeguarding Community Facilities

Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) (submission document Dec 2014)

Policy DM1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
Policy DM10: Development and Design
Policy DM17: Highway Design
Policy DM18: Vehicle Parking Standards
Policy DM25: Safeguarding Community Facilities

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

New Residential Development (SPG)

Appraisal:-

The main considerations in the determination of this application are:-

- Principle of Development
- Impact upon the Character of the Area
- Highway considerations
- Impact upon residential amenity

Principle of Development

Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and emerging Policy DM1 of the SADMP sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved.

The last use of Christopher's Church Hall was a community facility. Saved Policy CF2B of the Local Plan (2001), Policy 24 of the Earl Shilton & Barwell Area Action Plan (ES&B AAP) and emerging Policy DM25 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD seek to resist the loss of community facilities. These policies identify that it would only be appropriate to redevelop a community facility where either an equivalent range of community facilities are provided in an appropriate location and reasonable distance of the local community; or there is a surplus of the facility type within the immediate locality exceeding the needs of the community; or the loss of a small portion of the site would result in wider community benefits on the remainder of the site. In addition to this Policy 24 of the ES&B AAP and emerging Policy DM25 requires developers to demonstrate that the facility has been proactively marketed for a reasonable period of time at a reasonable marketed rate as supported and demonstrated through a documented formal marketing strategy and it has been offered to the local community for them to take ownership of the facility.

St Christopher's Church Hall has been vacant since late 2009/early 2010 as the owners concluded that the demand would not justify the required repairs of the building and therefore closed the facility. A structural survey of the buildings roofs was undertaken in June 2008. This report has been submitted by the applicant and identifies that the flat roof element is nearing the end of its life and will need replacement and the pitched roof requires full replacement due to it being in a poor state of repair. The total cost of repairs quoted was £39,000 excluding further work required to strengthen the structure, professional or statutory fees and VAT.

The applicant has provided details of marketing of St Christopher's Church Hall. The property was advertised for sale from March 2013 to October 2014 by Andrew Granger and also on Rightmove. The property was also published in the Business supplement of the Leicester Mercury dated 12-18th March 2013 and the Leicestershire Builder Magazine in March 2013. Particulars were also sent to interested parties at the initial launch. Speculative interest was received for the site from parties looking to retain the hall for uses such as day care, special needs care, gymnasium; however no offers materialised due to the issues identified in the structural survey of the building. Other interests from parties looking to use the building for religious purposes did also not materialise due to the lack of parking on site, distance from Leicester and concerns regarding the building's condition. The sale price was reduced by £10,000 in February 2014, however this did not attract interest from any community businesses/uses.

The applicant has also identified other community facilities within the local area, such as the Village Hall at High Street, Barwell and the George Ward Centre, Barwell which is a 15 minute walk from the site. Barwell includes a number of community facilities, which are identified in the Earl Shilton and Barwell Community Buildings Audit. It is considered that the loss of this facility would not cause a significant detrimental impact to the community of Barwell and in this instance is acceptable.

The applicant has demonstrated that the site has been proactively marketed for a reasonable time and unfortunately due to the cost implication of the works required it was unsuccessful getting a buyer for a community use. The site has been vacant for five years and therefore there may be additional issues with the building than those identified in the 2008 structure report. It is therefore considered that due to these issues and the associated costs there would be viability issues for the community facility to remain. Barwell has several community facilities which meet the needs of the local community and in this instance it is therefore concluded that the loss of this community facility will not be detrimental to the provision of community facilities in the local area and is therefore in accordance with saved Policy CF2B of the Local Plan (2001), Policy 24 of the ES&B AAP and emerging Policy DM25 of the SADMP.

With regard to the principle of residential development on the site, Core Strategy Policy 3 identifies Barwell as a settlement which supports Hinckley as the sub regional centre. Barwell is therefore identified as a sustainable location for development and the principle of residential development within the settlement boundary is considered acceptable subject to all other material considerations being acceptable.

Impact on the Character of the Area

Policy BE1 (criterion a) and RES5 of the adopted Local Plan, Policy 22 of the ES&B AAP and Policy DM10 of the emerging SADMP seeks to ensure that development complements or enhances the character of the surrounding area with regard to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials and architectural features with the intention of preventing development that is out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area. The Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on New Residential Development aims to ensure that new development has regard to the character of the area and is well integrated into its surroundings.

Currently the site contains a single storey building which covers the majority of the site. Surrounding the site is a majority of semi-detached properties with a row of terraced properties to the north east of the site (26 - 38 Moore Road). The proposed terraced properties are uncharacteristic of the general character of the area in terms of their design. Most properties within the immediate area are set back from the road by approximately five metres and follow a standard building line.

The site is on a corner plot between two junctions and is therefore within a prominent location in the area. The design and layout of the site should therefore reflect this. Currently the plot contains a large single storey building which is out of keeping with the general residential character of the area; however it does provide a distinct focal point within the street.

The proposed dwellings are to be set back into the site by approximately 12-15 metres. This does not follow the existing building line and set back distances of surrounding development of approximately 5 metres. This would therefore neither create a focal point nor fit in well with the existing residential development. Additionally the parking spaces for the properties proposed are tandem and to the front of the dwellings. Whilst there are examples of parking in front of properties within the area this is limited to one car and within the curtilage of the dwelling; whereas this proposal includes tandem parking and within a shared area, not within the curtilage of the properties. This application would result in a large amount of hardstanding for four vehicles in front of the dwellings, which would detract from the character of the area. The proposal in terms of its layout would therefore detract from the character and appearance of the area.

The adjacent characteristic semi detached dwellings are approximately 6 metres wide and have large window openings. Additionally the semi-detached dwellings have hipped roofs and have 5-6 metres gaps of separation between the two blocks. Some of the separation gaps have been infilled over time with garages and out buildings, however due to their low level nature the distinction between the semi-detached dwellings is clear and the character is retained. The proposal is for four semi-detached dwellings and would form two semi-detached 'blocks'. Semi-detached dwellings are characteristic of the area; however the bulk and massing of the proposed dwellings differ significantly from the existing semi-detached dwellings in the area. The proposed dwellings are narrow and separated by a small gap and mimic the design features of the adjacent terraced block to the north east, however they are semi-detached dwellings. It is considered that the bulk, scale and design of the buildings would detract from the character and appearance of the area.

It is therefore concluded that the proposal would not respect the existing street pattern or enhance the character of the area and is therefore contrary to saved Policy BE1 (criterion a) and RES5 of the adopted Local Plan, Policy 22 of the ES&B AAP, Policy DM10 of the emerging SADMP and the Councils adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on New Residential Development and the overarching principles and intentions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Highway Considerations

The proposal involves the creation of two accesses to serve two sets of tandem parking spaces for four vehicles. The original proposal involved the two access points from Moore Road, however one of the two access points was on the junction between Moore Road and Forest View Road and concerns were raised by Leicestershire County Council (Highways). An amendment was made to the layout to provide a second access point from Forest View Road, taking the access away from the junction, as requested by Leicestershire County Council (Highways). Due to this amendment there are no objections from Highways subject to conditions.

The 6C's guidance identifies in suburban areas two parking spaces should be provided for three bedroomed dwellings, the proposal meets these standards and provided two spaces per dwelling.

It is concluded that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety and is therefore in line with saved Policy T5 of the Local Plan (2001).

Impact upon Residential Amenity

Policy BE1 (criterion (i)) of the adopted Local Plan and SPG require that development does not adversely affect the amenities or privacy of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. The nearest properties to the site are 26 Moore Road to the north east and 1 Forest View Road and 9-15 Red Hall Road to the east.

Due to the design, orientation and layout of the proposal it is not considered that it would have any overlooking impacts to 26 Moore Road and 1 Forest View Road Peters Avenue. The properties have a set back distance of over 33 metres to the properties at the rear 9-15 Red Hall Road and therefore would not have a detrimental impact upon overlooking or overbearing impact.

The proposal would therefore not have a detrimental impact upon neighbouring amenity and is in accordance with saved Policy BE1 (criterion i) of the adopted Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan.

Developer Contributions

Policies IMP1 and REC3 of the adopted Local Plan and the Play and Open Space SPD require new residential development to contribute towards the provision and maintenance of public play and open space facilities for children. The Play and Open Space SPD sets out how the contribution is worked out in proportion to the size and scale of the development. The request for any developer must be considered alongside the guidance contained within the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (CIL). The CIL Regulations confirm that where developer contributions are requested they need to be necessary, directly related and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development proposed.

The development is within 400 metres of Masefield Close/Radford Park. The quality of open spaces has been considered within the Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study

(PPG 17 Study) 2011 which awarded Mayflower Close a quality score of 67%. In accordance with the Play and Open Space SPD the contribution in this case would total £5003.20 (£1250.80 per dwelling) and would be used to provide and maintain additional play equipment and to maintain existing equipped and informal amenity play space to mitigate the impact of the additional dwellings on such facilities.

Due to the close proximity of the proposal it is considered that the future occupiers would use the facility, increasing wear and tear and requiring maintenance. It is considered that the Council has demonstrated that the proposal is required for a planning purpose, it is directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably relates in scale and kind to the proposal in accordance with the CIL Regulations, and a contribution is justified in this instance.

The applicant has signed a heads of terms to agree to the requested contributions; however a Unilateral Undertaking has not been agreed and signed due to the application being recommended for refusal.

Conclusions

The applicant has provided adequate supporting information to demonstrate the loss of this community facility is acceptable and will not be detrimental to the community and is therefore in accordance with Saved Policy CF2B of the Local Plan (2001), Policy 24 of the Earl Shilton & Barwell Area Action Plan (ES&B AAP) and emerging Policy DM25 of the SADMP. Barwell is a sustainable location for residential development and therefore the principle of development is considered acceptable. The layout, design, scale, massing and bulk of the proposal would result in an overdevelopment of the site which would be out of keeping and detrimental to the character of the area and therefore contrary to saved Policy BE1 (criterion a) and RES5 of the adopted Local Plan, Policy 22 of the ES&B AAP, Policy DM10 of the emerging SADMP and the Councils adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on New Residential Development.

RECOMMENDATION:- Refuse planning permission.

Summary of Reasons for Recommendation and Relevant Development Plan Policies :

Reasons:-

- 1 By virtue of the constrained width of the site and the uncharacteristic layout, bulk and design of the scheme, the proposal would neither create a focal point nor respect the existing street pattern and would therefore detract from the character of the area. As a result the proposal is contrary to Saved Policy BE1 (criterion a) and RES5 of the adopted Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan, of the adopted Local Plan, Policy 22 of the ES&B AAP, Policy DM10 of the emerging SADMP and the Councils adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance on New Residential Development and the overarching principles and intentions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

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