



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Planning Committee

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 3 September 2013
DIRECTORATE: Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
HEAD OF PLANNING: Susan Bridge

N/2013/0620: Change of use to young persons' drop-in centre and installation of access ramp at Ancillary Building Abington Park, Wellingborough Road, Northampton

WARD: Park

APPLICANT: Park Avenue Methodist Church
AGENT: None

REFERRED BY: Scheme of Delegation
REASON: Council owned land and building

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVAL for the following reason:

The proposed use and the access ramp would have no undue adverse impact on the streetscene or on the amenities of neighbouring residents and park users. The proposal would thereby comply with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

2. THE PROPOSAL

2.1 Change of use of a disused former storage building as a young persons' drop-in centre including the installation of disabled access ramp. No substantial works are proposed apart from the replacement of the existing windows and repair to the roof and wood cladding. The proposed drop-in centre would be run by volunteers from the Park Avenue Methodist Church, which is located at nearby Park Avenue North.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The site comprises a storage building within Abington Park which is not currently in use.
- 3.2 The premises are located towards the edge of the park, in close proximity to the residential properties of Archway Cottages, the gardens of which are approximately 17m from the building.
- 3.3 The site is located within the Abington Park Conservation Area.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 None.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The current Development Plan comprises of the saved policies of the Northampton Local Plan 1997.

5.2 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.3 Northampton Borough Local Plan

E20 – New Development
E40 – Crime and Vandalism
E26 – Conservation Areas

6. CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 **Environmental Health** – No observations.
- 6.2 **Conservation** – The proposed development would enhance the exterior appearance of the building and ensure better future maintenance and upkeep. The application details suggest a light touch in terms of refurbishment, repair and sensitive replacement rather than a major overhaul of the building, which is welcomed. The application states that replacement doors and windows would be constructed of timber, which is considered appropriate. Further details of the proposed ramp will be required to ensure that it is in-keeping with the local area. The provision of a method statement for the proposed repair of elements of the building should be provided and the replacement of any materials on the exterior of the building should be controlled by condition. There are no objections to the proposed development from a conservation perspective.

6.3 **Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser** – The applicant has not considered the potential for crime nor the security of the building. The building is in a partial derelict condition and would recommend that the wooden parts of the building are replaced with brick or block work so that any windows, particularly in the front elevation, are capable of being secured to the fabric of the building. Brick or block work would also allow the steel faced door to be securely fastened to the fabric of the building. Also recommended the steel door to be retained. Any windows will need to be protected with a weld mesh frame or external bars set into the masonry to reduce the opportunities for vandalism and damage. The brick toilet block building adjacent to this site and in a more visible position in the public realm has to have its windows protected in such a manner. Window apertures not required will need to be bricked up. If the building benefits from an electricity supply, would recommend an intruder alarm connected to a digital dialler capable of eliciting a response from a third party. A loud external sounder should also be considered as it may attract attention from passing motorists and pedestrians should a burglary occur during the daytime. Any brick or block work should be treated with a sacrificial coating to a height of 2.4m to ease the removal of any graffiti.

6.4 Representations in favour of the development received from **23A Abington Park Crescent** and **Park Avenue Methodist Church** (the applicants), making the following points:

- Support the change of use of this building.
- Park Avenue Methodist Church is one of the group of local churches in Abington which have been working on providing a drop in centre facility in Abington for the use of young people.
- At present there is nowhere in the locality where young people can go and just “chill out”, particularly in the winter months. The aim of the project is to provide a supervised, safe environment where youngsters can go and meet up with their friends and just “chill”, surfing the internet, playing pool or chatting.
- This is a project we have been working hard on, to find the requisite funds to refurbish and fit out what is currently a derelict building.

6.5 Representations objecting to the development received from the leaseholder of **Archway Cottages**, on behalf of his tenants, making the following points:

- The applicants seek to offer a facility to young people loitering without purpose at night in the park.
- If the application is approved the plan is that the centre will offer these people an option to come to a small hut in the park to watch TV and play games. If the proposed target audience do attend we are concerned that their arrival, departure and possible loitering may serve to localise a problem and possibly inflict crime, noise and potentially an invasion of amenity and privacy to local, currently happy residents.

- This application is contrary to a number of the saved policies set out in the Local Plan.
- This is the Abington Park Conservation Area and as such development which in this case comprises the improvement of buildings is only permitted where it “enhances” the character and appearance of an area – the proposal for a night-time “Drop in Centre” in a beautiful park adjacent to residents, and not only Archway Cottages but also the residents of Wellingborough Road, Park Avenue and surrounding streets is not really an enhancement. While Policy H11 deals with housing development, the proposal will potentially have a harmful impact on amenity and has relevance to the consideration of this proposal
- The impact of development should not harm the amenities of residents. The development will potentially be harmful to the residents of Archway Cottages and others who currently enjoy a quiet trouble free existence. The existing proposed plans do potentially undermine their existing amenity, security and privacy rights.
- The proposal should only be considered if the applicants are able to protect the residents from potential disturbance and associated risks from people arriving at and leaving the centre at night.

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The main issues to consider are the impact on the nearby residential occupiers and the impact on the character of the existing park and the Conservation Area.
- 7.2 The proposal would, if successful, attract young people to the building as what is described by the applicants as a place to “chill out”, which the applicants state is not presently available in the area. The facility would be available for up to 25 young people, aged between 11 and 18, at a time, although it is not expected by the applicants that this maximum occupancy would be reached. Four adults would be present for supervision purposes.
- 7.3 The activities provided would be playing pool and a space to sit and meet fiends and have coffee / soft drinks. Laptops etc may be provided for playing games and doing homework but the applicants have stated that it is not now expected that a TV screen would be installed. Whilst music would be played the volume of this would be controlled by the supervisor.
- 7.4 The supervisors will keep track of who is attending and repeat visitors will be asked to return a permission slip signed by their parent / guardian. Good behaviour will be expected and those misbehaving may not be allowed to return.
- 7.5 The use would, potentially, lead to increased gathering of people around this building. Reportedly young people do already gather at

various points in the park and given that this is a public park this cannot be controlled and if no illegal activity is taking place this is acceptable in any event. It is nevertheless recognised that this can be intimidating.

- 7.6 In response to these circumstances the purpose of the proposed change of use of this building is to provide internal space for young people. Whilst there will naturally be comings and goings, the main function of this use will be internal, and any outdoor activity would be no more than the current situation which could occur in any event.
- 7.7 The comments made by the objector about directing arrivals and departures to the front of the building is noted, however it is not considered is an overriding need for a hedge. The area where the hedging could be planted would, in any event, be outside the control of the applicant, so could not be required by condition.
- 7.8 As an alternative to this, the applicants have clarified that external lighting would be provided and that those leaving the centre would be directed to the most appropriate route.
- 7.9 The use may attract more than the desired number users, and some of the users may be excluded from the premises due to their behaviour. These circumstances could lead to people loitering in the vicinity of the premises. However, any potential negative outcome resulting from this would be counterbalanced as the proposed use is intended to address this very matter as stated by the applicant.
- 7.10 Concerns have been raised by the Police as to the security of the building, if this is to house electronic equipment which could potentially become more of a target for theft / vandalism. However, the applicants have clarified that no valuable items would be kept in the building. A condition requiring details of security measures is nevertheless proposed. Due to the building's location it is currently potentially vulnerable to antisocial activity but by bring it back into active use it is considered that it would help to reduce this potential.
- 7.11 To protect the amenities of nearby residents it is proposed to restrict the hours of use, to ensure the premises are closed at 9.30pm, as proposed. Although the application states that the opening time would be 7pm, it has since been clarified by the applicants that some daytime use is also proposed, by a group for younger children. This would introduce these younger children to the centre, which they may then visit when older. It is not considered that this daytime use would have any negative impact. It is proposed, therefore, to permit opening between 11am and 9.30pm on Mondays to Fridays. The applicants have agreed to these hours, and have stated that the use would only initially be on two evenings per week, with infrequent daytime use. If weekend use is proposed in the future they would make a further application which would be assessed and determined on its merits.

- 7.12 The proposal would have a positive impact on the conservation area, as this would bring a run-down building back into productive use, enhancing its appearance. A condition is proposed requiring details of materials to be used including to the access ramp, to ensure these are sympathetic to this context.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposed use would have no adverse impact on the conservation area or on the amenities of adjoining or nearby residents, subject to the controls afforded by the proposed conditions.

9. CONDITIONS

- (1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan, Floor Plan, Internal Layout, Photographs.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

- (3) Prior to the commencement of any development, full details of the security measures to be incorporated into the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The measures shall be implemented and completed fully in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of security and the prevention of crime, in accordance with Policy E40 of the Northampton Local Plan.

- (5) Details and/or samples of all proposed external facing materials including fenestration and the design of the access ramp shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that the development will harmonise with its surroundings in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

- (6) The premises shall be open only between the hours of 11am and 9.30pm from Mondays to Fridays and at no time on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank or Public Holidays.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

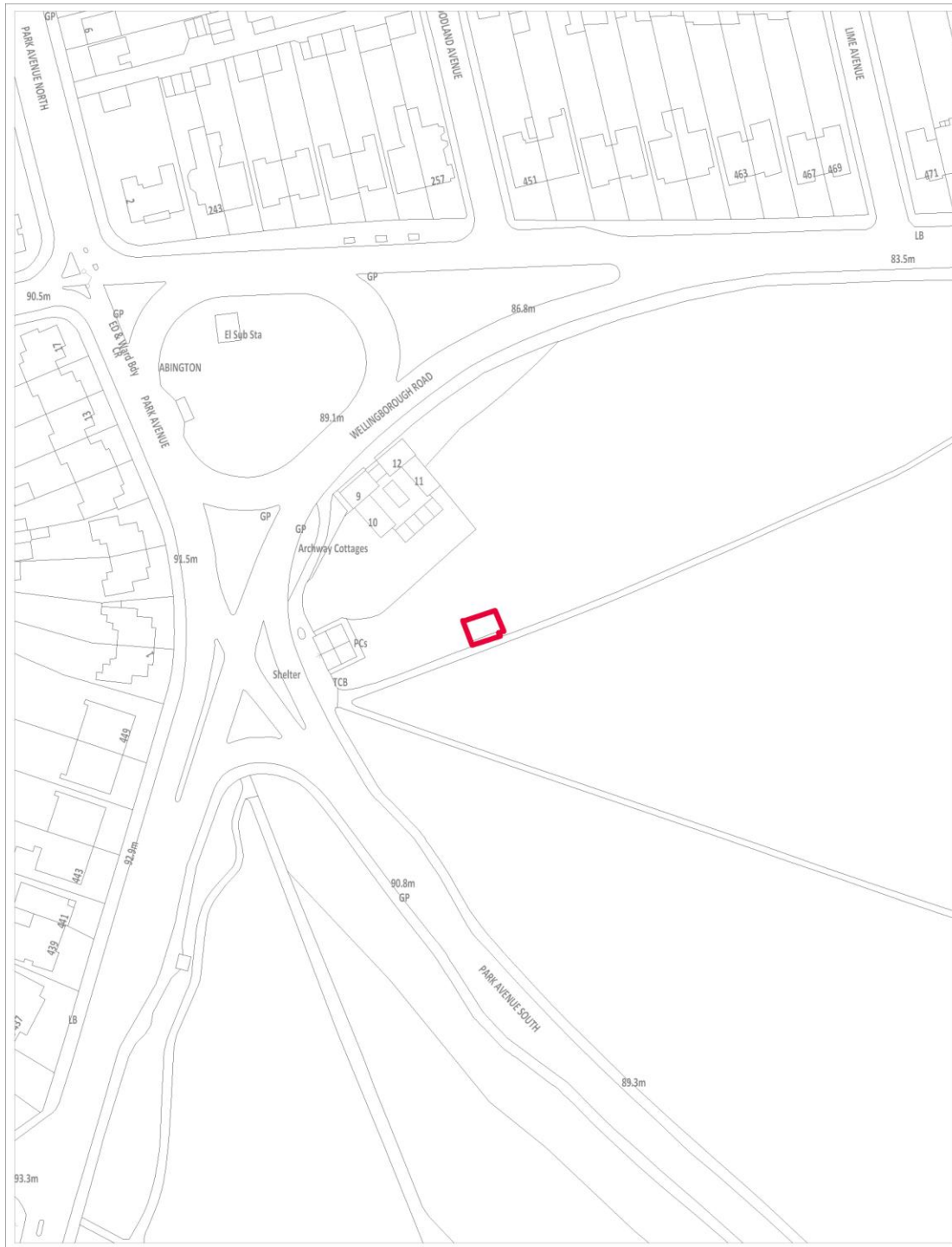
10.1 N/2013/0620.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Name: **Planning**
 Date: **16th August 2013**
 Scale: **1:1250**
 Dept: **Planning**
 Project: **Committee**

Title
Abington Park

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