



**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2015  
**DIRECTORATE:** Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning  
**DIRECTOR:** Steven Boyes

**N/2015/0705:** Demolition of church rooms and erection of 5no. town houses at Abington Christian Centre, Lea Road

**WARD:** Abington

**APPLICANT:** Mr Angus Lawson

**REFERRED BY:** Cllr D. Stone and Cllr Z. Smith  
**REASON:** Out of character and will infringe on the defensible space around existing residences leading to overlooking, light blocking and other nuisances. Would damage the character of the area and inappropriate in terms of their height

**DEPARTURE:** No

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**APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:**

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The proposed development, subject to conditions, would represent an acceptable re-use of the site and would contribute to the established housing need in Northampton. The development is of a satisfactory design and layout and would have no significant detrimental impacts on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties or future occupiers of the dwellings. The development would be acceptable in terms of highway safety. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies S3, S10, BN9 and H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

**2. THE PROPOSAL**

2.1 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of church rooms and erection of 5 no. town houses at Abington Christian Centre, Lea Road. Each of the five dwellings would be built over three floors with a kitchen/breakfast, WC and living/dining area on the ground floor, two bedrooms at first floor and an en-suite master bedroom on the second floor. The dwellings would have low level brick

wall enclosures to the front. The scheme has been amended to reduce the ridge height of the proposed dwellings. No on-site parking facility is proposed.

### **3. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 3.1 The application site is currently occupied by Abington Christian Centre church rooms. The design and access statement states that the premises are used for a number of activities on a daily basis and can attract up to 100 persons each day. The existing premises are currently too small for their current ongoing activities, with the Christian Centre opting to relocate their premises elsewhere in Northampton.
- 3.2 The building is brick built with black metal railings enclosing the site to the front.
- 3.3 To the north of the site is no. 2 Lea Road, to the east the site is abutted by Aegis House which houses a number of small businesses, to the south is nos.113, 115, 117, 119, 121 and 123 Adnitt Road and to the west is highway.

### **4. PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 An outline planning application (N/2003/254) for the demolition of buildings and redevelopment of the site for residential purposes was approved by Planning Committee in May 2003. The development related to both this site and the Church on Adnitt Road. It was anticipated that the site could accommodate up to 25 new flats. The planning permission has since lapsed.

### **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 Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014) and Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

#### **5.3 National Policies**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Paragraph 17 – Core Principles – seeks to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for existing and proposed occupiers.

Paragraph 49 – Housing application should be considered with a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 50 - To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future

demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

Paragraph 56 - Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

#### **5.4 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)**

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy H1 – Housing Density & Mix & Type of Dwellings – States that development should provide for a mix of house types, sizes and tenures to cater for different accommodation needs. Housing developments will be expected to make the most efficient use of land having regard to the location and setting of the site, the existing character and density of the local area, accessibility to services and facilities, proximity to public transport routes, the implications of density for affordability and viability, the living conditions provided for future residents, the impact on the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Policy S3 – Scale and Distribution of Housing Development – requires the construction of approximately 18,870 dwellings in Northampton Borough over the plan period.

Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles – requires development to satisfy a range of sustainable development principles including through achieving the highest standards of sustainable design; maximising opportunities for reuse and recycling; and promoting walking and cycling and protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment and heritage assets and their settings.

Policy BN9 – Planning for Pollution Control – development that is likely to cause pollution, either individually or cumulatively, will only be permitted if measures can be implemented to minimise pollution to a level which provides a high standard of protection for health and environmental quality.

#### **5.5 Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)**

Due to the age of the plan, the amount of weight that can be attributed to the aims and objectives of this document are diminished, however, the following policies are material to this application:

Policy E20 – New Development – The policy seeks to secure development which has an acceptable design, layout and achieves acceptable standards of amenity.

#### **5.6 Supplementary Planning Documents**

Northamptonshire County Parking Standards SPG 2003  
Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004  
Residential Extensions and Alterations Design Guide SPD

### **6. CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS**

Comments received are summarised as follows:

6.1 **Cllr T. Ansell:**

- Should try to retain the Church, if retaining the use of the building as a church is not feasible the Church should be converted for residential use.
- Would be an eyesore and plain in comparison to neighbouring buildings.
- Should have the same ridge height as neighbouring buildings.
- Overlooking of gardens.
- Too close to number 123 Adnitt Road.

6.2 **Cllr Z. Smith:**

- Would damage the character of the area.
- Would be inappropriate in terms of their height.

6.3 **Cllr D. Stone:**

- Would be out of sympathy with the neighbourhood.
- Will infringe the defensible space around existing residences leading to overlooking, light blocking and other nuisances.

6.4 **NBC Public Protection:** Noise and odour reports have been considered. A condition is recommended in relation to noise and no further comments are made regarding odour.

6.5 **NCC Highways:** Parking spaces are at a premium in the area, and while parking may be reduced between 8am and 6pm, parking outside of these times are likely to increase. Therefore you may wish to satisfy yourself that the increased parking demands will not have an undue amenity impact on neighbouring properties. The plans should demonstrate that the properties will not encroach or undermine the highway.

6.6 **Northamptonshire Police:** The gate giving access to the rear alley which runs behind the houses should be secured using a key operated mortice lock operable from both sides for convenience. Rear garden gates should be capable of being secured with a shoot bolt and padlock. All ground floor doors and windows should be tested and 3<sup>rd</sup> party certificated to meet the requirements of BS PAS 24:2012 to comply with Secured by Design and the forthcoming requirements of Approved Document Q of Building Regulations.

6.7 **NCC Archaeology:** Evidence for the development and use of the building will be lost due to demolition. This does not however represent an overriding constraint on the development provided that adequate provision is made for the investigation and recording of any remains that are affected. An appropriate condition should be attached to any planning permission for the site.

6.8 The proposed development has been advertised by way of site notice and neighbour letters, nine objections have been received from residents and owners of properties on **Lea Road, Purser Road and Adnitt Road** making the following comments:

- Object to the height of the buildings, which are much higher than the houses either side.

- The second floor windows would overlook our gardens.
- Loss of light.
- Not in keeping with other houses on this side of the road.
- Do not follow the rooflines of existing properties.
- Parking problems.
- The design should be of a higher quality.
- The scale and massing is out of character with its surroundings.
- Support the principle of the applications as the Church buildings are in a considerable state of disrepair. There is also a concern surrounding health and safety given the dilapidated state of both premises, however have concerns regarding parking, loss of light to the adjacent car park on Purser Road, loss of view and light, damp, disruption to business during the building works.
- Loss of winter sunlight.
- Footpath for rear access will be a security risk if not gated.

## **7. APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of the development**

- 7.1 The application site is located within a predominantly residential area in close proximity to the town centre and within walking distance of Wellingborough Road Local Centre. There are a number of small businesses located within properties amongst the terraced streets, including a cluster of small businesses to the rear of the site.
- 7.2 The site is currently occupied by church rooms associated with the Church on Adnitt Road. The church rooms currently have a community function and provide a space for groups associated with Abington Christian Centre. The building has an unrestricted D1 Use Class; this in effect means that there are no restrictions on hours of operation or intensity of the use, and the site could change to another D1 Use class without the benefit of planning permission. It is considered that an unrestricted D1 Use has the potential to represent a much more intense use of the site than the redevelopment of the site for five residential dwellings.
- 7.3 The NPPF directs new housing to sustainable areas, best able to support it in terms of access to facilities and services and access to good public transport links, this is reinforced at a local level by Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. It is considered that the application site is in a sustainable location offering access to facilities, services and public transport links. There is a variety of residential accommodation in the local area including both houses and flats; it is considered that the proposed development would have a neutral impact on the character of the housing mix in the surrounding area.
- 7.4 The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to demonstrate that there is a five year housing land supply. Northampton Borough Council currently cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply. It is therefore considered that this development would make a contribution, towards addressing the current and future needs for housing within the Borough.

### **Visual amenity**

- 7.5 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. Amended plans have been submitted reducing the ridge height of the houses by 1.6m, it is considered that the height of the dwellings would now be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposed design in terms of scale, massing and proportions largely reflects the character of the street scene.
- 7.6 The proposal has incorporated traditional features into the design including chimneys, lintels and cills and traditional style doors with fanlights above. It is considered that the materials palette will be significantly important to ensure that the development assimilates well into the built form of the streetscene and the surrounding area. Details of materials will be controlled by appropriately worded conditions.
- 7.7 The proposed development is considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the site, the streetscene and the surrounding area in accordance with policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan, Policies S10 and H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the NPPF.

### **Residential amenity**

- 7.8 Separation distances of approximately 29m would be achieved from the rear of the proposed dwellings to the rear elevations of dwellings on Purser Road. The proposal would therefore exceed the recommended privacy distances set out in Appendix 6 of the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Residential Extensions & Alterations Design Guide. It is therefore considered that there would not be any significant overlooking to the dwellings to the rear of the site.
- 7.9 Regarding the effect of the development on the adjoining properties to both flanks of the proposed terrace, it is considered that there would be no significant detrimental effect on these neighbours.
- 7.10 Front to front separation would be approximately 13 metres in keeping with the existing pattern of development and would not have a significant impact on the amenity of neighbours.
- 7.11 Each of the dwellings would have a private rear garden in excess of 10m in length. A shared right of way would provide access from the highway to the rear gardens, this access should be secured by a lockable gate. Details of boundary treatments shall be a condition of any planning permission for the proposed development.
- 7.12 Noise and odour surveys have been submitted as part of the application. NBC Public Protection have considered these reports and have recommended a condition in relation to noise and have no further comments to make regarding odour.
- 7.13 In terms of residential amenity the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

### **Archaeology**

- 7.14 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of heritage assets to be lost due to development. The significance of the application site lies in its place in the Baptist movement in Northampton and the wider County. Northamptonshire County Councils archaeologist has recommended that a condition be attached to any planning permission for the site for building recording Level 2 as defined in English Heritage *Understanding Historic Buildings* (2006). Evidence for the development and use of the building will be lost due to demolition. This does not however represent an over-riding constraint on the development provided that adequate provision is made for the investigation and recording of any remains that are affected.

### **Highways**

- 7.15 No off-street parking is proposed as part of the development. Parking spaces are at a premium in the area, and while parking may be reduced between 8am and 6pm, parking outside of these times is likely to increase, however the site is in a relatively sustainable location. The site is within walking distance of services and facilities located along Wellingborough Road and would be approximately 160m from the nearest bus stop. The development would also result in the removal of the existing church rooms which have no restrictions on opening times or visitor numbers.
- 7.16 Although finely balanced, it is considered that although the development would inevitably affect demand for on-street parking, given the site's relatively sustainable location, the character of the area and the counterbalancing effect of the removal of the existing use, the proposal's impact on highways and parking would be acceptable and in accordance with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the NPPF.

### **Loss of Church Facility**

- 7.17 The proposed development would lead to the loss of an existing community facility. However, the applicant has confirmed that the existing premises are too small for the Church's current ongoing activities and the Church is planning to relocate to elsewhere in Northampton. The site is going to become vacant and due to the nature of the previous use of the building, it is not viable to convert the premises to residential or use the facility for another community based venture.
- 7.18 The principle of redevelopment of the site was established back in 2003 when outline permission was granted for residential purpose. The Abington Christian Centre has obtained planning permission to relocate to the former Pearce factory site on Wellingborough Road and it is not considered that to refuse the application on the ground of the loss of church facility could be substantiated.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The proposed scheme would be acceptable in principle and would contribute towards the Boroughs five year housing land supply.
- 8.2 The amended scheme would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the site, the streetscene and the surrounding area.
- 8.3 The proposal would not create any significant detrimental impacts to the residential amenity of neighbouring residential properties. Acceptable residential

amenity would be achieved for the occupants of the new dwellings. The development would not create any significant impacts to highway safety

## **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: 14/L105/2E; 14/L105/1E.

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

- (3) Prior to the commencement of development, details of all proposed external facing materials 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. This is a pre-commencement condition in order to allow submission of details in a timely manner.

- (4) No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded, in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 141. This is a pre-commencement condition in order to allow investigation works to be carried out in a timely manner.

- (5) Details of the provision for the storage of refuse and materials for recycling shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented prior to the first occupation or bringing into use of the building(s) hereby permitted and thereafter retained.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (6) Full details of the method of the treatment of the external boundaries of the site together with individual plot boundaries shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, implemented prior to the first occupation of the buildings hereby permitted and retained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the boundaries of the site are properly treated so as to secure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.



- (7) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no extensions or other form of enlargement to the dwellings hereby permitted, nor erection of porches, outbuildings, hardstandings, storage tanks, gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure, shall take place.

Reason: To prevent overdevelopment of the site in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- (8) Prior to development commencing, the applicant shall submit to the Local Planning Authority an assessment of the noise exposure of each habitable room and outdoor amenity spaces due to noise from the nearby extraction systems. A scheme to protect any affected habitable rooms/bedrooms or out outdoor amenity spaces shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing. For habitable rooms/bedrooms this will require the provision of a ventilation, or heat control system that enables the windows to be kept closed in warm weather where necessary to preserve conditions for resting/sleeping. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the properties being occupied and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with Policy BN9 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. This is a pre-commencement condition in order to allow submission of details in a timely manner.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 N/2015/0705.

## **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: Site Location Plan  
 Date: 14th September 2015  
 Scale: 1:1250  
 Dept: Planning  
 Project: Planning Committee

**Title**  
**Abington Christian Centre, Lea Road**

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