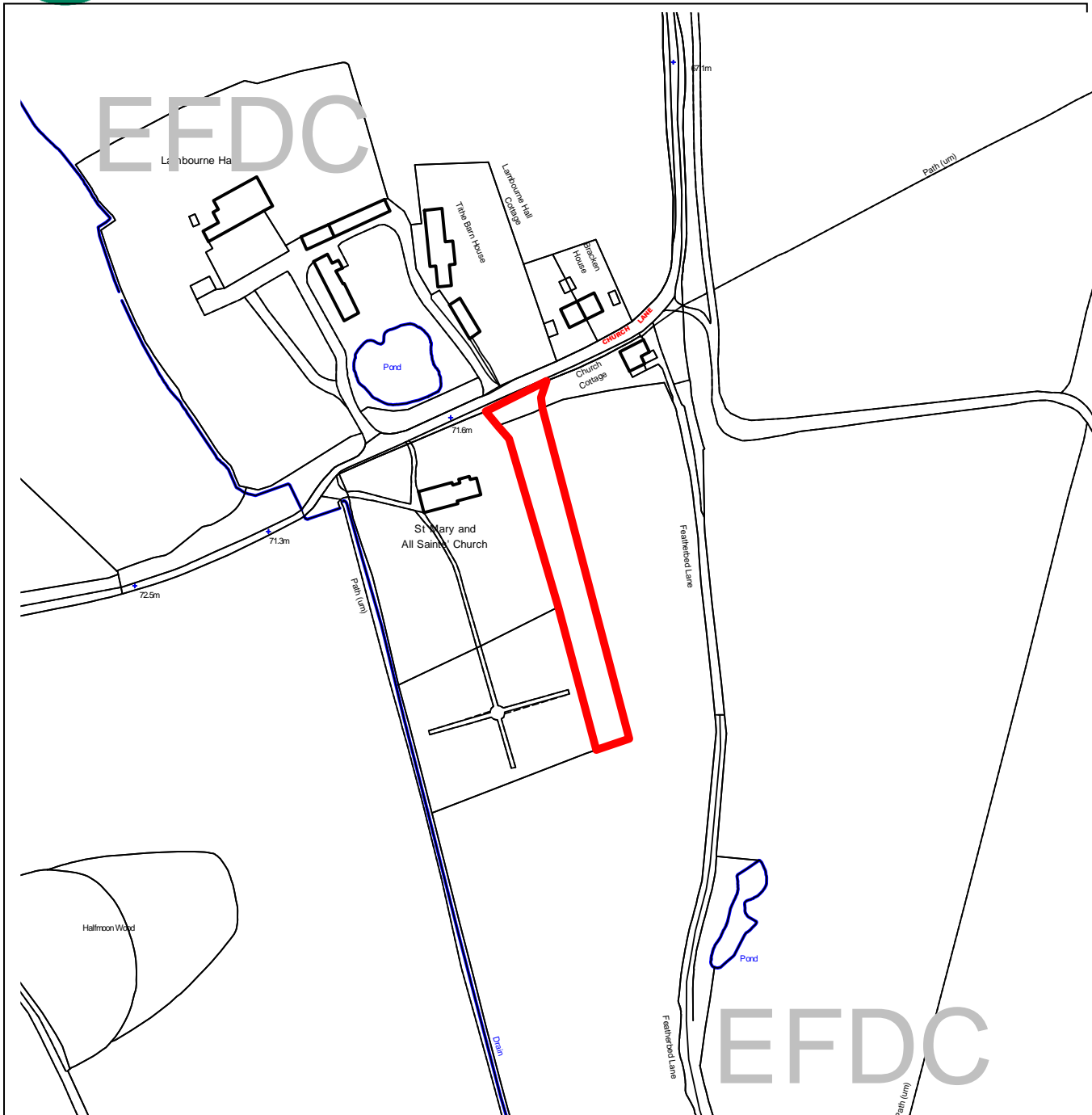




Epping Forest District Council



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Application Number:	EPF/0040/18
Site Name:	Parish Church of St Mary & All Saints, Church Lane, Lambourne RM4 1AH
Scale of Plot:	1:2500

Report Item No: 9

APPLICATION No:	EPF/0040/18
SITE ADDRESS:	Parish Church of St Mary & All Saints Church Lane Lambourne Essex RM4 1AH
PARISH:	Lambourne
WARD:	Lambourne
APPLICANT:	Reverend Roger Gayler
DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:	The proposal is to build a new Church and Community Centre on a site adjacent to the Church grounds to provide space for activity rooms, event spaces, Church ancillary facilities and rooms for prayer and reflection. A new path to be carefully routed through the existing graveyard is proposed to link the new Church Centre to the Church and will be the subject of a separate Faculty application. Landscaping works and parking are provided within the proposed site.
RECOMMENDED DECISION:	Grant Permission (With Conditions)

Click on the link below to view related plans and documents for this case:

http://planpub.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/NIM.websearch/ExternalEntryPoint.aspx?SEARCH_TYPE=1&DOC_CLASS_CODE=PL&FOLDER1_REF=604213

CONDITIONS

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and retained strictly in accordance with the following approved plans: P100, P101, P102, P110, P111, P112, P120, P121, P122, P123. P200B, P210B, P202B, P210B, P211B, P212B, P220B, P221B, P222B, P223B. P300B, P301B, P310B, and Location Plan.
- 3 No preliminary ground works shall take place until a written scheme and programme of archaeological investigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme and programme.
- 4 Prior to preliminary ground works taking place, details of foul and surface water disposal shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details, and shall be provided on site prior to the first occupation and shall be retained for the lifetime of the development.

- 5 No development, including works of demolition or site clearance, shall take place until a Tree Protection Plan, Arboricultural Method Statement and site monitoring schedule in accordance with BS:5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations) has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved documents.
- 6 Samples of the types and details of colours of all the external finishes shall be submitted for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development, and the development shall be implemented in accordance with such approved detail.
- 7 Additional drawings that show details of proposed new [windows, doors, rooflights, eaves, verges, fascias, cills, structural openings and junctions with the existing building - add/delete as appropriate], by section and elevation at scales between 1:20 and 1:1 as appropriate, shall be submitted to and approved by the LPA in writing prior to the commencement of any works.
- 8 Prior to commencement of development, details of screen walls, fences or other means of enclosure shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and shall be erected and thereafter maintained in the agreed positions before the first occupation of any of the dwellings hereby approved.
- 9 Prior to any above ground works, full details of both hard and soft landscape works (including tree planting) and implementation programme (linked to the development schedule) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of the building or completion of the development, whichever is the sooner. The hard landscaping details shall include, as appropriate, and in addition to details of existing features to be retained: proposed finished levels or contours; car parking layouts; other minor artefacts and structures, including signs and lighting and functional services above and below ground. The details of soft landscape works shall include plans for planting or establishment by any means and full written specifications and schedules of plants, including species, plant sizes and proposed numbers /densities where appropriate. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting or establishment of any tree, or shrub or plant, that tree, shrub, or plant or any replacement is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies or becomes seriously damaged or defective another tree or shrub, or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place.
- 10 Prior to first occupation of the development, a scheme to enhance the ecological value of the site shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The ecological value shall be quantified using the Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator (BIAC) where appropriate. The scheme shall be implemented in full prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved.
- 11 No services shall be installed within the root protection area of any retained tree / hedge unless the Local Planning Authority gives its prior written approval by way of an appropriate planning application.

- 12 If any tree, shrub or hedge shown to be retained in the submitted Arboricultural reports is removed, uprooted or destroyed, dies, or becomes severely damaged or diseased during development activities or within 3 years of the completion of the development, another tree, shrub or hedge of the same size and species shall be planted within 3 months at the same place. If within a period of five years from the date of planting any replacement tree, shrub or hedge is removed, uprooted or destroyed, or dies or becomes seriously damaged or defective another tree, shrub or hedge of the same species and size as that originally planted shall, within 3 months, be planted at the same place.
- 13 The proposed new roof lights shall be of the conservation type and shall be installed so that it is not any higher than the surrounding roof tiles.
- 14 All new rainwater goods and soil and vent pipes shall be of black painted metal.
- 15 No deliveries, external running of plant and equipment or demolition and construction works, other than internal works not audible outside the site boundary, shall take place on the site other than between the hours of 07:30 to 18:00 on Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturday and not at all on Sundays, Public or Bank Holidays.
- 16 Wheel washing or other cleaning facilities for vehicles leaving the site during construction works shall be installed and utilised to clean vehicles immediately before leaving the site. Any mud or other material deposited on nearby roads as a result of the development shall be removed.
- 17 All material excavated from the below ground works hereby approved shall be removed from the site.
- 18 The proposed use of this site has been identified as being particularly vulnerable if land contamination is present, despite no specific former potentially contaminating uses having been identified for this site. Should any discoloured or odorous soils be encountered during development works or should any hazardous materials or significant quantities of non-soil forming materials be found, then all development works should be stopped, the local planning authority contacted and a scheme to investigate the risks and/or the adoption of any required remedial measures be submitted to, agreed and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the recommencement of development works. In such instances, following the completion of development works and prior to the first occupation of the site, sufficient information must be submitted to demonstrate that any required remedial measures were satisfactorily implemented or confirmation provided that no unexpected contamination was encountered.
- 19 Prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved, 1 Electric Vehicle Charging Point shall be installed and retained thereafter for users of the site.
- 20 No increase in hard surfaces areas shown on drawing number P201B shall take place without prior consent from the Local Planning Authority through an appropriate planning application.
- 21 The building hereby permitted shall only be used for purposes directly ancillary to services and events within the adjacent church and shall not be used for any other purposes.

- 22 No amplified sound shall be used within the building so as to be audible from any location outside of the red line area of the application site as identified on the approved site location plan.
- 23 Other than use in connection with religious services in the adjacent church at Christmas and Easter, the building hereby permitted shall not be used after 10.30pm on any day of the week.

This application is before this Committee since it is for a type of development that cannot be determined by Officers if more than five objections are received (or in cases where less than 5 were consulted, a majority of those consulted object) on grounds material to the planning merits of the proposal (Pursuant to The Constitution, Part 3: Scheme of Delegation to Officers from Full Council).

Description of Site:

The Church of St Marys and All Saints lies within a site of around 1.3ha at the southern end of Church Lane. The church building, which is listed Grade II*, sits within the historic grounds and graveyard which comprise around 0.6ha. The full site includes an extension to the graveyard to the south and a parcel of land along the whole of the east side which is laid to grass and currently used for overspill parking.

The site lies in what is predominantly an open location within the Green Belt. A small cluster of residential accommodation lies around the church, including a number of listed buildings. The only vehicle access is from Church Lane which is a largely single track road with an irregular pattern of dwellings located along its length. A number of public rights of way pass close to the church site, linking to the wider local footpath network.

Description of Proposal:

Permission is sought for a single storey building in the church grounds within the grassed area east of the listed building. The building is described as a 'Church and Community Centre' and comprises around 40 sq.m comprising an activity space, and oratory and ancillary services. The building is centred on the main church and is of a simple form with a gable end pitched roof, around 3m high at eaves and 6m at ridge, with principle openings in the north, west and south elevations. Materials comprise timber cladding to walls, a tiled roof and powder coated window frames.

External works comprise laying a hard surface from the gate, around the western side of the building to three disabled parking spaces beyond the remainder of the field being retained as grass), and provision in front of the building of a bin store and 6 cycle stands.

The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement and a Heritage Statement.

Relevant History:

None

Policies Applied:

Adopted Local Plan:

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations

indicate otherwise. The Development Plan currently comprises the Epping Forest District Council Adopted Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006).

The following policies within the current Development Plan are considered to be of relevance to this application:

CP1	Achieving sustainable development objectives
CP2	Protecting the quality of the rural and built environment
CP5	Sustainable building
GB2A	Development in the Green Belt
GB7A	Conspicuous development
HC10	Works to Listed Buildings
HC12	Development affecting the setting of Listed Buildings
NC1	SPA's, SAC's and SSSI's
NC4	Protection of existing habitat
RP4	Contaminated land
CF8	Public Halls and Places of Worship
U3B	Sustainable Drainage Systems
DBE1	Design of new buildings
DBE2	Effect on neighbouring properties
DBE4	Design in the Green Belt
DBE9	Loss of Amenity
LL1	Rural landscape
LL2	Inappropriate rural development
LL10	Adequacy of landscape protection

NPPF (February 2109):

The revised NPPF is a material consideration in determining planning applications. As with its predecessor, the presumption in favour of sustainable development remains at the heart of the NPPF. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF provides that for determining planning applications this means either;

(a) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

(b) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making, but policies within the development plan need to be considered and applied in terms of their degree of consistency with the Framework.

In addition to paragraph 11, the following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered to be of relevance to this application:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Achieving sustainable development – paragraphs 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 |
| 8 | Promoting healthy and safe communities – paragraphs 92, 97 |

- 9 Providing sustainable transport – paragraphs 104, 107, 108, 110, 111,112
- 11 Making effective use of land – paragraphs 119, 122, 123, 124
- 12 Achieving well designed places – paragraphs 126, 130, 131, 132, 135
- 13 Protecting Green Belt land – paragraphs 137, 138, 141, 143, 147, 148, 149
- 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change – paragraphs 154, 159 – 169
- 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – paragraphs 174, 175, 179 - 182, 183, 185, 186
- 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – paragraphs 194, 195, 197, 199 – 205, 208

Epping Forest District Local Plan (Submission Version) 2017:

On 14 December 2017, the Council resolved to approve the Epping Forest District Local Plan (2011-2033) – Submission Version ("LPSV") for submission to the Secretary of State and the Council also resolved that the LPSV be endorsed as a material consideration to be used in the determination of planning applications.

The Council submitted the LPSV for independent examination on 21 September 2018. The Inspector appointed to examine the LPSV ("the Local Plan Inspector") held examination hearings between 12 February and 11 June 2019. As part of the examination process, the Council has asked the Local Plan inspector to recommend modifications of the LPSV to enable its adoption.

During the examination hearings, a number of proposed Main Modifications of the LPSV were 'agreed' with the Inspector on the basis that they would be subject to public consultation in due course. Following completion of the hearings, in a letter dated 2 August 2019, the Inspector provided the Council with advice on the soundness and legal compliance of the LPSV ("the Inspector's Advice"). In that letter, the Inspector concluded that, at this stage, further Main Modifications (MMs) of the emerging Local Plan are required to enable its adoption and that, in some cases, additional work will need to be done by the Council to establish the precise form of the MMs.

Although the LPSV does not yet form part of the statutory development plan, when determining planning applications, the Council must have regard to the LPSV as material to the application under consideration. In accordance with paragraph 48 of the Framework, the LPAs "may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- c) The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given)."

Footnote 22 to paragraph 48 of the NPPF explains that where an emerging Local Plan is being examined under the transitional arrangements (set out in paragraph 214), as is the case for the LPSV, consistency should be tested against the previous version of the Framework published in March 2012.

As the preparation of the emerging Local Plan has reached a very advanced stage, subject to the Inspector's Advice regarding the need for additional MMs, significant weight should be accorded to LPSV policies in accordance with paragraph 48 of Framework.

The following policies in the LPSV are considered to be of relevance to the determination of this application, with the advanced stage of the LPSV, all policies should be afforded significant weight:

No.	POLICY
SP1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
SP2	Spatial Development Strategy
SP6	Green Belt and District Open Land
SP7	The Natural Environment, landscape character and green infrastructure
T1	Sustainable transport choices
DM1	Habitat protection and improving biodiversity
DM2	Epping Forest SAC and Lee Valley SPA
DM3	Landscape Character, Ancient Landscapes and Geodiversity
DM4	Green Belt
DM5	Green and Blue Infrastructure
DM7	Heritage Assets
DM9	High Quality Design
DM15	Managing and reducing flood risk
DM16	Sustainable Drainage Systems
DM19	Sustainable water use
DM20	Low carbon and renewable energy
DM21	Local environmental impacts, pollution and land contamination
DM22	Air quality

Consultation Carried Out and Summary of Representations Received

Date of site visit: March 2018, revisit October 2021

Number of neighbours consulted: 14 – consulted 2018 and 2021

Site notice posted: 08 March 2018

Responses received: Objections have been received 17 separate addresses, both locally and from further afield from those who use the area for recreational purposes, as under:
 CHURCH LANE – No. 1, 1 SHOELUCK COTTAGE, BRACKEN HOUSE, CHURCH COTTAGE, LAMBOURNE HOUSE, SOAPLEY HOUSE, TITHE BARN HOUSE and THE ELMS. One further objector simply states their address as 'Church Lane'.

Other Abridge / Lambourne addresses – 59 ALDERWOOD DRIVE, DEWS HALL NEW ROAD, 127 ONGAR ROAD and KINGS COTTAGE SILVER STREET.

Other objectors – 24 COTLEIGH ROAD ROMFORD, HOLLY CREEK DEBDEN ROAD LOUGHTON, 37 FAIRVIEW DRIVE CHIGWELL and MOTTS COTTAGE MOTT STREET LOUGHTON.

Objectors raise a number of concerns:

- Impact on character and appearance of the location – objectors refer to the unchanged historic character of the site and surroundings over many years, and the impact development would have on the historic setting of the listed church.
- Green Belt considerations – objectors argue development is inappropriate.
- Vehicle and traffic issues – concerns at increased vehicle movements on Church Lane where passing bays are limited.
- Proposed use – concerns are raised at the proposed use of the building following comments at public exhibition as to the intentions. Residents argue the location is unsuitable for large public gatherings.
- Noise and disturbance – concerns at noise issues arising from events, both in terms of residential amenity of neighbours and the wider quiet enjoyment of the setting.
- Need – it is argued that ample community facilities exist the local area, particularly at Abridge Village Hall, and the Holy Trinity Church site with Abridge village centre which is being disposed of for redevelopment.

- Accessibility – building is remote from local population
- Surface water drainage issues – concerns that the introduction of hard surface areas may impact surface water run-off.
- Ecological and biodiversity impacts – particularly potential impact on local wildlife and routes.
- Covenant issues – residents comment the land was gifted to the church for parking use only. This is however a matter outside of the planning application process.

Parish Council: Lambourne Parish Council objected to the original application and maintained their objection following revisions setting out the following grounds:

1. The building is not within keeping to the unique Green Belt setting and detracts from the beauty of the 12th Century building.
2. Parking and access along a single track road would be dangerous and not suitable.
3. Councillors feel that the need for this building has not been proven.
4. The Council also feel that the amended plans were not sufficient.

Main Issues and Considerations:

In considering representations from consultees, it is evident that there have been a number of different interpretations of the intentions and reasons for the development. The applicants Design and Access Statement sets these out as under:

Church statement on the reasons for the new building

St. Mary and All Saint's Lambourne, along with Trinity Church in the nearby town of Abridge, have always acted as sister churches to serve this immediate part of Essex. However Holy Trinity, which had served the community since the 1800's but then fallen into disrepair, has recently been closed and is to be sold for residential use. However, the Parish of Lambourne is determined to continue the work of worship, hospitality, fellowship and learning to an equal extent, and this planning application is the result of that need and missional plan. The church therefore proposes to establish a centre in the grounds of St. Mary and All Saint's, to continue and build on the work of Holy Trinity.

St. Mary's is a grade 2 building which will have served the community for 900 years in 2020. With its churchyard, it provides an oasis of prayerful peace in a green and pleasant land. It is sited within 5 miles of large centres of urban and suburban population, but still it acts as a calm, still place available to many and all in its wide community.*

Proposed outcomes of the project

- 1. The Centre will consist of rooms to meet, worship, study and pray and have kitchen space, toilets and storage.*
- 2. It will be as environmentally friendly as possible and blend into the character of the site.*
- 3. The Centre will provide an opportunity for children's work, Sunday School, 'Messy Church', clubs and as a venue for schools to use as they study the church.*
- 4. It will provide spaces for study and prayer, both individually and in groups. These opportunities will also be offered to the local Deanery and Diocese as a venue for training courses and study days.*
- 5. It will be available for courses and groups on art, therapy, photography, poetry, conservation and history for the wider community.*
- 6. It will be a place of interpretation and understanding of the history of church and local community.*
- 7. It will offer the required extra facilities to ensure that concerts, conferences, and larger worship events will be possible within the church itself.*

8. It will provide a setting to help people understand and interpret the significance of the church down the ages.

Resident representations suggest that at public meetings, it has been suggested that other activities may include use of the building as a nursery, as a ramblers refreshment stop and for social gatherings including wedding receptions etc. If Members are minded to approve the application for the purposes stated in the application, then conditions may be appropriate to address some of the concerns raised in the representations.

The primary considerations in the application arise around the location of the site within the Green Belt and the historic and landscape character of the site. On both issues, the arguments are finely balanced.

Policy 149(b) of the NPPF sets out buildings which may be considered as not inappropriate in the Green Belt as '*appropriate facilities for ... cemeteries and burial grounds.*' While it may be argued that the building will likely perform such a function, it is evident that the intention is to use it for a much greater range of purposes and thus it would not fit this definition. Accordingly, it is necessary to consider the development as inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances clearly outweigh the harm (NPPF paragraph 148).

The Church is a Grade II* listed building. The building is of 12th century origins and was substantially altered in the 18th century effectively to the current form. The importance of the building is recognised both in its external form and in its internal layout and finishes. Any alterations to the internal layout would be likely to have significant impact on the historical significance and character and would certainly be resisted. It is noted from the applicants submission that some form of community work has previously taken place at the Holy Trinity Church in Abridge but the building is beyond its useful life and is being disposed of. The benefit of that site to the Church's function is questionable given its remoteness from the church itself and the lack of parking available to it, notwithstanding that demolition and replacement in that location is unlikely to be financially viable. Thus, for the church to adequately serve the needs of its community, there is evidence of a need for ancillary facilities in an appropriate location.

Such a location would it seems need to be within easy reach, preferably walking distance, of the church itself in order to fulfil the church community need. A review of the immediate surroundings demonstrates that few such locations exist. Discussions ruled out a location within the church grounds, or as an extension to the building, as any such works would evidently be harmful to the historic character of the listed building. Irrespective of land ownership considerations, no other locations exist.

Officers recognise that it is appropriate for a parish church to provide facilities to its community beyond simply a place to hold services. Church buildings such as St Mary & All Saints Church have become vulnerable as they no longer address all the needs of their community; needs for new facilities, accessibly, etc. There is a clear risk for these buildings and their wider site to become redundant and then suffer from lack of repairs and maintenance. In this case, such facilities cannot be realistically provided within the existing building or in the immediate environs of the church yard. As a result, the needs of the church community could be seen as amounting to very special circumstances such that paragraph 148 of the NPPF is satisfied.

It is recognised that the church and its immediate setting is relatively unique and has remained unchanged for many years. It is however noted that this is not perhaps as applicable to the land beyond the original church yard – the burial grounds have been extended onto land to the south, and the land to the east including the application site has in more recent years been used for parking when the ground conditions have allowed.

The current scheme has developed taking account of the site constraints. As originally submitted, the application proposed a larger building located on the west side of the field, abutting the church yard. The position, scale, forms, detailing and materials of the new building have been carefully considered and the revised scheme is the result of a close collaboration between the architect and officers. The challenge was to design a building which would appear immediately subservient to the church and its sensitive context without looking like an ordinary outbuilding but creating a building that could immediately relate to the church and its site.

The building has been reduced in length to reduce its visual impact and intentionally positioned on the axis of the chancel to show the relationship with its parent building. The proposal features a simple form to reflect its subservient status. Clear references have been taken from the church in its architectural detailing (window frames) and materials.

The site also lies within a sensitive landscape setting with hedges, hedgerows and trees contributing to the small-scale historic settlement pattern which would be sensitive to change. The church itself makes a positive contribution to the wider landscape being highly visible from a number of viewpoints on nearby public rights of way. In the context, the relocation of and reduction in the size of the building has recognised these constraints and now provides for the retention of trees on the outer edge of the original churchyard and provides clearer visible separation between the buildings.

The application has been delayed to allow consideration of any mitigation measures that may be required as a result of vehicle movements through the EFSAC, the nearest point of which is around 5km from the site. The analysis recognises primary use will be for purposes linked to existing church activities and assessment of the submission recognises that the requirement of the trip generation assessment have been met. Thus, Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken:

Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

A significant proportion of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (the EFSAC) lies within the Epping Forest District Council administrative area. The Council has a duty under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations) to assess whether the development would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the EFSAC. In doing so the assessment is required to be undertaken having considered the development proposal both alone and in combination with other Plans and Projects, including with development proposed within the Epping Forest Local Plan Submission Version (LPSV).

The Council published a Habitats Regulations Assessment in January 2019 (the HRA 2019) to support the examination of the LPSV. The screening stage of the HRA 2019 concludes that there are two Pathways of Impact whereby development within Epping Forest District is likely to result in significant effects on the EFSAC. The Pathways of Impact are disturbance from recreational activities arising from new residents (residential development only) and atmospheric pollution as a result of increased traffic using roads through the EFSAC (all development).

Whilst it is noted that the independent Inspector appointed to examine the LPSV, in her letter dated 2 August 2019, raised some concerns regarding the robustness of parts of the methodology underpinning the appropriate assessment HRA 2019, no issues were identified in relating to the screening of the LPSV or the Pathways of Impact identified. Consequently the Council, as competent authority under the Habitats Regulations, is satisfied that the Pathways of Impact to be assessed in relation to the likely significant effects of development on the EFSAC alone and in combination with other plans and projects are:

- 1) Recreation activities arising from new residents (recreational pressures); and
- 2) Atmospheric pollution as a result of increased traffic using roads through the EFSAC.

As this application is for non-residential development it has been screened in relation to the atmospheric pollution Pathway of Impact only and concludes as follows:

- 1) The development would not result in a net increase in traffic using roads through the EFSAC.

The Council is therefore satisfied that the application proposal would not result in a likely significant effect on the integrity of the EFSAC. Having undertaken this first stage screening assessment and reached this conclusion there is no requirement to undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the application proposal or seek financial contributions toward mitigation and monitoring measures.

Residents raise a number of issues in their representations around vehicular activity, potential noise and disturbance and additional activity. As part of the discussion on the applications, it has been a key consideration that the building should be designed to be a support facility for the church rather than a destination venue in its own right. The applicant's statement refers to use of the church for concerts and conferences, activities which the church could be used for at present, and the building will provide ancillary facilities for such activities rather than accommodating these activities independently, officers consider the hall itself to be too small for any large gatherings. Supplementary conditions can be used to reinforce the ancillary nature by limiting hours of use and non-church related activities, and limiting noise through amplified sound. Officers are satisfied therefore that residential amenity would not be significantly impacted. In terms of vehicular movements, no objections are raised by the highway authority

Officers note comments in relation to the ecological value of the site in broad terms. No alterations to hedgerows or trees arise from the application other than routine trimming of the hedge along the site boundary and the building sits on what is otherwise a grassed area. Ecological enhancements, archaeological examination and tree protection measures can be addressed by conditions. Noting comments around surface water drainage in residents responses, the site does not lie in a flood risk assessment zone suggesting special measures are required although conditions are appropriate to ensure foul sewage is dealt with in a septic tank and that surface water is disposed of by soakaway.

Conclusion:

The highly sensitive location of the site in terms of the importance of the listed building, its historic setting in an area that has changed little over many years, and its wider Green Belt function has been recognised in the evolution of the proposals. The building is of a smaller scale and is situated away from the boundary of the historic churchyard. The separation protects the historic setting of the church.

Green Belt policy recognises that ancillary buildings to support existing facilities can be appropriate for specific community uses. While this does not directly apply in this case, officers recognise that it is appropriate to provide sufficient facilities to safeguard the future use of the building by a viable church community and that this is sufficiently unique to amount to very special circumstances so long as the broad Green Belt objectives are preserved.

Residents concerns are noted, and these may arise out of some misdirection in terms of how the building is intended to be used. At the size now proposed, the building is not big enough to host significant events such as concerts and conferences, only to provide ancillary facilities to support these events which can already take place in the church. Conditions can be imposed to provide restrictions on hours and nature of use, and amplified sound for example.

Taking account of all material considerations, officers recognise the needs of the church community and therefore on a fine balance recommend that the application is approved subject to conditions.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report item please use the following contact details by 2pm on the day of the meeting at the latest:

***Planning Application Case Officer: Ian Ansell
Direct Line Telephone Number: 01992 564481***

or if no direct contact can be made please email: contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk