

Planning Committee

03 January 2012

Reference:
APP/11/01208

Area Team:
North Team

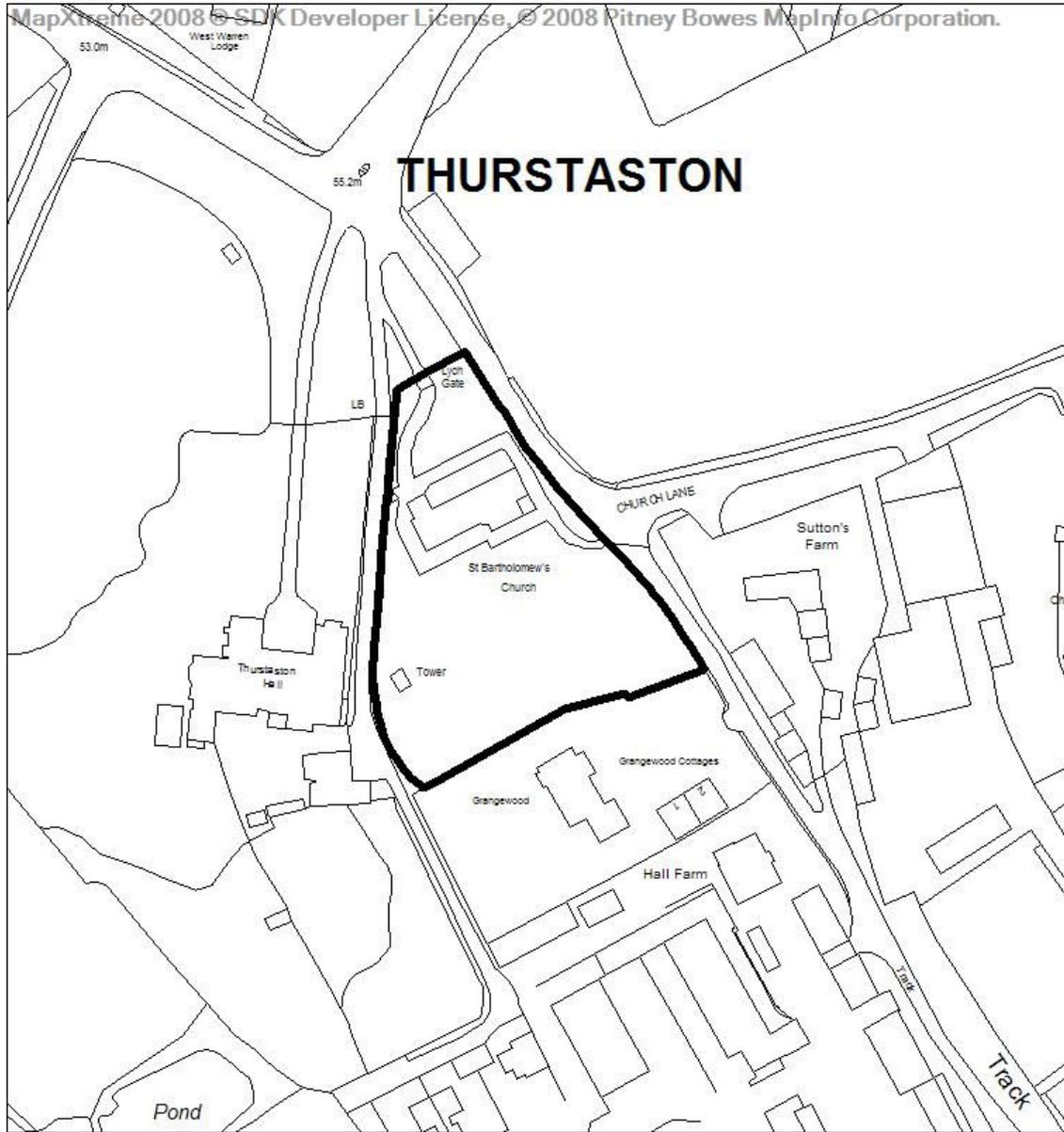
Case Officer:
Miss K Elliot

Ward:
**West Kirby and
Thurstaston**

Location: St Bartholomews Church, CHURCH LANE, THURSTASTON, CH61 0HW
Proposal: Renewal of planning permission APP/2008/6027 for new entrance for disabled access incorporating ramped access, wheelchair w/c facility, tea point and meeting area

Applicant: Revd Jane Turner
Agent : Andrew Smith Architects

Site Plan:



Development Plan Designation:

Green Belt
Area of Special Landscape Value
Thurstaston Conservation Area

Planning History:

APP/05/5517 - New entrance facility for disabled access incorporating wheelchair w/c facility, tea point and meeting area - Approved 16/09/2005

APP/08/6027 - New entrance for disabled access incorporating ramped access, wheelchair w/c facility, tea point and meeting area - Approved 21/11/2008

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:

REPRESENTATIONS

Having regard to the Council's Guidance on Publicity for Applications, six letters of notification were sent to the occupiers of adjoining properties. A Site Notice was also displayed. At the time of writing this report, no representations had been received.

CONSULTATIONS

Director of Technical Services (Traffic & Transportation Division) - no objections to the proposal.

Irby, Thurstaston and Pensby Amenity Society - did not comment on the proposal.

Director's Comments:

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

The application represents a departure from the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan and is subject to Policy GB2 and national Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2) which both relate to development in the green belt.

INTRODUCTION

The proposal is for the renewal of a previously approved planning permission for the erection of a new entrance disabled access incorporating ramped wheelchair access, toilet facility, tea point and meeting area.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The principle of the development conflicts with the principles of Policy GB2 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan and national Planning Policy Guidance 2 and thus represents a departure from green belt policy. The principle of the development is otherwise acceptable subject to Policies CH1, CH2, CH19, LA1, PPS5 and the Thurstaston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site of St Bartholomew's Church is a Grade II listed building located at the heart of Thurstaston Conservation Area. It is also sited within an Area of Special Landscape Value and on land designated as Green Belt, therefore is in a highly sensitive location. St Bartholomew's is a beautifully designed building and remarkably sophisticated in its spatial composition for such a small rural church. The building is central to the character of the surrounding conservation area and is of a sandstone construction. The land slopes appreciably downwards from east to west and the proposed extension would be sited to the west end of the church, on a lower section of the land. A 1.8 metre high hedge marks the western boundary of the site adjacent to where the proposed extension would be erected. The surroundings are characterised by open grassed land and substantial, densely planted, areas of woodland. The only other building in the immediate area of the extension is Thurstaston Hall which is approximately 20 metres away from the development site. Other buildings are in excess of 50 metres away.

POLICY CONTEXT

Policies GB2, PPG2, CH1, CH2, CH19, LA1, PPS5 and the Thurstaston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan are directly relevant to the proposal.

APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES

The proposed development is for a new entrance for disabled access incorporating a ramped access, wheelchair toilet facility, tea point and meeting area at St. Bartholomew's Church. As the proposal affects a grade II listed building, great care has been taken in the design and siting of the proposal which reflects the requirements of the local community's changing church going habits. The proposal is the same as the development which was granted planning permission in 2008. The renewal of the original planning permission is acceptable which takes in to account the character and form of the church. The new structure and access ramp should not visually detract from the church's architecture or the wider context of the Conservation Area due to their discrete siting.

The width of the site restricts the size of the proposal to a certain extent but it is considered that anything larger would be out of character and scale with the church itself. The creation of the new seating area attached to the south side of the extension hides what may have been a blank wall and adds character, whilst also allowing members of the public to enjoy the adjacent memorial garden. The proposed materials to be used are acceptable as they are in harmony with the existing building and rural setting. The proposal would therefore not have a detrimental impact on the local street scene and would be in keeping with the existing appearance of the Conservation Area. Samples of external materials and finishes will be required to ensure that the existing appearance and character of the church are protected.

The proposal does not meet the requirements of Policy GB2 and is considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriateness in itself causes harm to the Green Belt and as such development is only acceptable if very special circumstances exist which consequently outweigh the harm caused by the inappropriateness and any other harm. Visual harm to the Green Belt and impact on its openness in this instance would be very limited as the structure is relatively small, would be sited immediately adjacent to a much larger building and would be screened from view from much of the public area. Also, as there are significant areas of woodland in the area, the site is only readily visible from a relatively small section of the Green Belt.

The original reasoning behind the proposed extension was to be part of a scheme to reflect the requirements of modern church goes such as the provision of accessible toilet facilities, refreshment arrangements, disabled access and a meeting area. These would allow more communal use of the church building by extending its uses to provide, in effect, a multi-function facility that could welcome visitors, host school parties and hold meetings while also preserving the existing congregation and stimulating its growth in order to ensure the church's future survival. Despite the age of the building, the proposal represents the need for older buildings to adapt and evolve in order to secure the long term sustainability of those which hold significant local importance. It is considered that these are very special circumstances necessary to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt. There is ample space between the extension and the western boundary for the proposed access ramp, which would not appear cramped.

Whilst the proposal is not strictly in accordance with Policy GB2 and is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the very special circumstances outlined above, and the fact that the limited scale of the extension would ensure that any negative impact on the Green Belt from such a small extension would be minimal, are considered to make the proposal acceptable in terms of harm to the Green Belt. The proposal has been very carefully designed to be in keeping with the host building in terms of architectural features and scale. Visually, the design of the extension would preserve the character of the building and the Conservation Area. The development therefore meets the requirements of Policies CH1, CH2 and CH19. The carefully considered scale and design of the extension is such that it preserves the setting of the church and does not create a cramped appearance. The structure would be built of materials to match the existing church. The overall design of the extension would not detract from the appearance of the area and would not affect important views into or out of the Conservation Area and is recommended for approval.

SEPARATION DISTANCES

Separation distances do not apply in this instance, as no residential properties will be affected by the proposed development.

HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS

There are no Highway Implications relating to this proposal.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

There are no Environmental/Sustainability issues relating to these proposals.

HEALTH ISSUES

There are no health implications relating to this application.

CONCLUSION

The proposal preserves the appearance of the Grade II listed building and surrounding Conservation Area. The development is in keeping with the requirements of Policy GB2 and PPG2 due to the very special circumstances of the proposal and meets the criteria of Policies CH1, CH2, CH19, LA1, PPS5 and the Thurstaston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Summary of Decision:

Having regards to the individual merits of this application the decision to grant Planning Permission has been taken having regards to the relevant Policies and Proposals in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2000) and all relevant material considerations including national and regional policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

The proposal preserves the appearance of the Grade II listed building and surrounding Conservation Area. The development is in keeping with the requirements of Policy GB2 and PPG2 due to the very special circumstances of the proposal and meets the criteria of Policies CH1, CH2, CH19, LA1, PPS5 and the Thurstaston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Recommended Decision: Approve

Recommended Conditions and Reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the plan(s) received by the Local Planning Authority on 15th October 2008.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the listed building and the wider Thurstaston Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CH19 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan.

4. Before development commences, samples and specifications shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The extension shall be erected in line with the approved details and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the listed building and the wider Thurstaston Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CH19 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan.

5. Before development commences, full details and samples of the exterior timber work for the new entrance and seating to the south facade shall be viewed on site or submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be erected

in line with the approved details and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the listed building and the wider Thurstaston Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CH19 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan.

6. Before development commences, full details and samples of the new access ramp shall be viewed on site or submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The ramp shall be erected in line with the approved details and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the listed building and the wider Thurstaston Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CH19 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan.

Last Comments By: 23/11/2011 11:01:58
Expiry Date: 05/12/2011