

WEST MALLING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 1ST DECEMBER 2015, 7.30PM
AT WM CEP SCHOOL, NORMAN ROAD, WEST MALLING

Present: Mr R Selkirk (Chairman)
Mrs T Dean
Mr J Galloway
Mr S Harriott
Mrs C Lane
Mrs Y Smyth

Also in attendance:
approx. 100 residents

Minute		Action by	Action taken	Response
15/592	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Mr Bullard and Mr Carroll			
15/593	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – none other than those routinely declared. In particular, members present made it clear that none of them was a member of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)			
15/594	WELCOME Mr Selkirk welcomed everyone to the meeting and was heartened to note such a good attendance by residents; he asked the members of the Planning Committee to introduce themselves. Mr Selkirk explained that this dedicated meeting of the Parish Council's Planning Committee had been specially convened to consider the planning application for proposed development of the Church Centre: TM/15/03389/FL - Proposed conversion of St Mary's Church Centre to 3 residential units, construction of pedestrian and vehicular access, two new dwellings, associated car parking and landscaping together with the demolition of the former air raid shelter and toilets at Church Centre Churchfields for St Mary's Church PCC			
	Mr Selkirk invited Mrs Clare Innes to make a brief presentation on behalf of the PCC			
15/595	PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE PCC Mrs Clare Innes explained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She was a chartered surveyor but not an architect • The proposal was to demolish the air raid shelter and toilets • The Church Centre was in the Conservation Area but was not Listed • There would be two small extensions to the rear, but apart from that the footprint remained unchanged • The access to the proposed three units in the Church Centre would be from the rear of existing eastern side and would be two-storey • There would be two units at the rear • Access from western side would be on gradient from Churchfields • There would be ten parking spaces: two for each unit 			

<p>15/596</p>	<p><u>COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS</u></p> <p>Mr Selkirk adjourned the formal part of the meeting and invited comments from residents.</p> <p>The following issues were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on Conservation Area • Two red-brick houses to rear not in keeping • Constitutes over-development • Parking and Access • Headlights shining into existing houses • Provision of community facilities desirable e.g. meeting room • Kent Fire & Rescue NOT consulted about access • Concern about overlooking from rooflights of properties in Churchfields • Would like more affordable housing • Location of bin store • Streetlights • Drainage 			
<p>15/597</p>	<p><u>WMPC'S RESPONSE</u></p> <p>Mr Selkirk re-convened the formal part of the meeting to enable members to formulate comments for submission to T&MBC.</p> <p>After members had discussed the application, it was agreed that Mr Selkirk formulate draft comments incorporating the various points; these draft comments would be circulated to those members present and once finalised would be submitted to T&MBC by the Clerk</p>	<p>RS</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>*</p>
	<p>Subsequent to the meeting the following comments were formulated by Mr Selkirk and agreed with those members present.</p> <p>The Clerk then submitted them to T&MBC.</p> <p><i>[West Malling Parish Council: Church Centre Planning Application: TM/15/03389</i> <i>Having reviewed fully all aspects of this application, West Malling Parish Council opposes this application as the proposed development of the Church Centre (which is within the West Malling Conservation Area and right next to the Green Belt) is excessive in terms of the number of houses being planned and there are numerous design and safety issues with the site.</i> <i>West Malling Parish Council supports the principle of converting the Church Centre to residential use. We believe that the PCC has fully explored the options for retaining for community use and this has proved unviable financially.</i> <i>However, the application in its current form seeks to substantially develop the site, which in our view is out of keeping with the location and surroundings within the community.</i> <i>This decision was reached after a dedicated Planning Committee meeting which was attended by over 100 West Malling residents. Throughout the period of the application we have proactively sought to ensure our residents were aware of the application and have been afforded the opportunity to view the application & comment on it.</i></p> <p>Over Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The Church Centre is located next to St Mary the Virgin Church and churchyard. It is within the West Malling Conservation Area and adjacent to the Green Belt.</i> 2. <i>Any development of this site needs to be sympathetic to its location and history. This approach was supported by English Heritage.</i> 3. <i>West Malling Parish Council was content with the development of the existing Church Centre structure into 3 residential properties. However the inclusion of 2 new large residential properties at the rear was considered to be intensive over development of</i> 	<p>Clerk</p>	<p>✓</p>	

the site.

- 4. These properties would significantly overlook the churchyard directly at first floor level and would materially change the West Malling Conservation Area.*

West Malling Conservation Area

- 5. The application has Velux windows in the front of the Church Centre. These windows are located at a height that would allow a view over both the Churchyard and directly into the first floor (i.e. bedroom) windows of a number of Churchfields properties.*
- 6. West Malling Parish Council opposes this and would only be willing to consider their inclusion if they were moved to a significantly higher height in the roof. This would allow light into the rooms, but respecting its location opposite a Churchyard as well as respecting Churchfields residents' privacy.*
- 7. The application has a bin store planned for an area for the front of the building, close to the public footpath. West Malling Parish Council believes this is an inappropriate location as it materially changes the West Malling Conservation Area and should be located at the rear of the building.*

Vehicular Access

- 8. The proposed vehicular entrance and exit to the Church Centre would allow vehicle access across one of the busiest pedestrian pavements in West Malling. The route through the Church Yard (Public right of way) is very well used (especially by the elderly and families with young children) as it provides access between the High Street and a large number of residential roads. We do not believe that the proposed design would allow both pedestrians and car users to have clear enough view of each other.*
- 9. For example, the views towards the Church would be blocked by the height of the wall and the proposed bin store area. Additionally the view down Churchfields is proposed to have part of the wall lowered, but this will not be sufficient. We believe it can only be obtained to a satisfactory level by removing a large portion of the wall and considering its place in the Conservation Area this would significantly change the view. This is something we do not support.*
- 10. The turning circle both into and out of the Church Centre is very tight and in the view of WMPC it is not safe in its current form. We do not believe it would allow sufficient space for two vehicles to enter and leave at the same time while maintaining a safe environment for pedestrians.*
- 11. The exit of the Church Centre is located directly in front of a number of residential properties. We have very real concerns that they will be disproportionately affected by the headlights of any vehicle leaving. We would ask that the applicant install a gate with solid parts or an alternative solution designed to minimise this.*

Emergency Services

12. *Linking with our comments on vehicular access, we would ask TMBC to specifically contact Kent Fire & Rescue and South East Coast Ambulance Service to obtain their comments on the vehicular access up Churchfields as well as the 'turning circle' outside the Church Centre. Due to the nature of the concerns expressed by both resident and Councillors we would ask that West Malling Parish Council is included in this exercise.*

Loss of Parking

13. *The application states that the implementation of the new vehicular access would lead to the loss of only one public car parking space. We believe the correct figure (taking into account local parking arrangements) to be of the order of 4 or 5. Due to the parking issues already faced by the residents of Churchfields, this is not acceptable. Losing this number of spaces would place an unacceptable burden on the local residents.*

14. *Additionally we would ask the applicant to make the proposed 'visitor' car parking spaces open to the residents of Churchfields to use.*

Flooding

15. *The area in front of (as well as the adjacent bungalows) to the proposed vehicular access are already liable to flooding. We are concerned that the introduction of a sloped driveway facing towards this area and although there is an ACCRO drain indicated, we do not believe it will be sufficient to deal with the likely volume of water.*

16. *We would ask that this is increased in size to ensure that no water would escape over the public highway.*

Materials

17. *The proposed extension to the rear of the Church Centre is to be made of red brick. This is out of keeping with the existing building and extension (toilet block that would be demolished) which is already primarily faced in stone. Considering the Church Centre is within the West Malling Conservation Area & adjacent to St Mary the Virgin Church we do not feel that red brick is in keeping with this and would ask that it is constructed in matching stone to the existing.*

18. *Although we object to the proposed 2 houses to be built at the rear of the Church Centre, we also object to the red brick material it is planned to build it in. Considering the Church Centre is within the West Malling Conservation Area & adjacent to St Mary the Virgin Church we do not feel that red brick is in keeping with this and would ask that it is constructed in matching stone to the existing.*

Street lighting

19. *There are least 2 streetlights located near the proposed development that would need to be moved. These are owned by West Malling Parish Council & we expect the applicant to pay for their removal & the installation of any new streetlights that will be required to ensure adequate lighting levels in Churchfields.*

Archaeology Survey

20. *Due to the age and history of the Church Centre we would insist on a full archaeology survey is conducted before construction and the TMBC Conservation Officer monitor the building works throughout the duration.*

Construction Management Plan

- 21. *Due to the size and complexities of this site, it is important that a very detailed Construction Management Plan is prepared and agreed as part of any planning approval. West Malling Parish Council would expect to be consulted on all aspects. Below are some specifics about the site for inclusion.*

- 22. *The Church Centre is located at the end of a very narrow dead end residential street. This road 'Churchfields' provides the only vehicular access the site. However both West Malling Parish Council and many local residents feel very strongly that this road is very unsuitable for any form of construction vehicle as well as all deliveries.*

- 23. *Access to the Church Centre via the Churchyard is not supported by West Malling Parish Council. It would cause unacceptable disruption to the Churchyard (which we maintain).*

- 24. *There is a field (within the Green Belt) behind the Church Centre. It may be possible to create a temporary access road for construction traffic only to use. West Malling Parish Council would support this but this is conditional that TMBC confirm that this does not create any precedent for future planning applications for this field.*

- 25. *Due to the current parking issues in Churchfields and the surrounding roads, it is important that all parking for the construction is contained within the site.*

- 26. *As this site is located close to a residential area and a large sheltered housing development, the hours of building works should take account of this and be restricted to Monday to Friday 0800 to 1600.*

Section 106 Funding

- 27. *Due to the size of the proposed development, West Malling Council insists that TMBC seek Section 106 funding as part of any planning approval. We would insist in being involved in all aspects of the discussion and that 100% of the funding is used for projects agreed between us and TMBC.*

Community Infrastructure Levy Funding

- 28. *Due to the size of the proposed development, West Malling Council insists that TMBC seek Community Infrastructure Levy funding as part of any planning approval. We would insist in being involved in all aspects of the discussion and that 100% of the funding is used for projects agreed between us and TMBC.]*

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.15pm

Signed.....

Date.....