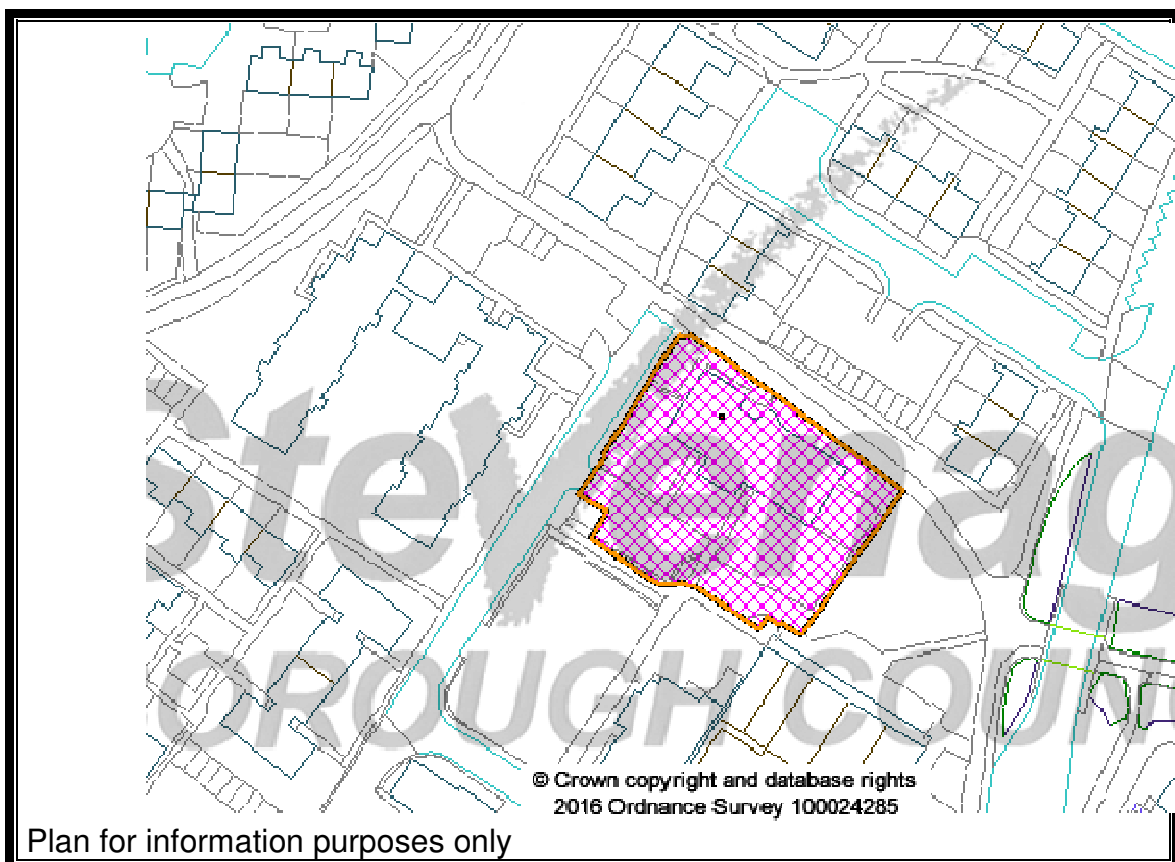


Meeting: Planning and Development Committee **Agenda Item:** 6
Date: 25 May 2016
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Application No:	16/00227/FP
Location:	Symonds Green Community Centre, Filey Close, Stevenage.
Proposal:	Single story front extension
Drawing Nos.:	061-C-001, 061-C-003 02, 061-C-003 03, 061-C-003 04, 061-C-003 06, 061-C-003 07, 061-C-003 08
Applicant:	Stevenage Borough Council
Date Valid:	7 April 2016
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises the Symonds Green Community Centre and the Church of Christ the King and an area of open grassed amenity space located between Filey Close and Scarborough Avenue at the northern end of the Filey Close neighbourhood centre. To the side of the community centre is an enclosed area which is used as a playground/play area for the playgroup that operates from the community centre. The building is single storey, although both the main hall and church hall are relatively high, and the main access is from the south across the amenity space. The building is constructed out of light coloured facing brick with a brown plain tiled roof. There is timber boarding applied at high level to the western flank elevation of the centre.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 2/0087/69. Outline application for residential development. Refused 07/07/69.
- 2.2 2/0230/70. Sites for residential development. Approved 23/07/71.
- 2.3 2/0051/80. Community and ecumenical centre. Approved 01/5/80.
- 2.4 06/00519/FP. Erection of 2.4m high palisade fencing. Approved 07/11/2006.
- 2.5 08/00342/FP. Single storey extension to create new youth hall and café and erection of 2m high fencing around new play area. Approved 13/08/2008
- 2.6 The application comes before the planning committee for consideration as the applicant and land owners are Stevenage Borough Council.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 This application, which is submitted on behalf of the Council, seeks planning permission for the erection of a single storey extension on the south-west side of the building to provide an enlarged entrance foyer, additional hall with storage facilities and a café area. The Church Hall building is not being extended. The existing gross internal floor-space of the Church and the Community Centre is 430sqm. The proposed extension will add a further 189 sqm.
- 3.2 The submitted plans identify the existing entrance foyer area being extended out by 3m bringing it roughly in line with the forward most part of the Church. To the west of this the extension would project out toward the neighbourhood centre a further 12m creating the new hall and café. This would extend westwards by 15.5m where it would adjoin the existing outdoor enclosed play area. The extension would have eaves of 2.8m and a ridge height of approximately 4.8m. The extension would be constructed out of facing brickwork and roof tiles to match the existing community centre. The extension is designed with a concealed flat roof within which would be located a raised roof lantern to offer light to the new hall area.
- 3.3 The current Community Centre is used by a variety of groups for a variety of clubs and sports. The applicant estimates that the majority of the users come from the Symonds Green neighbourhood. The Symonds Green Community Association manages the Community Centre and also manages the nearby

Scarborough Avenue Annex, which has been used in the past but is now becoming no longer fit for purpose. The association also previously used space within the neighbourhood centre, however, this has now been lost. The applicant indicates that the premises are all well used and run to near full capacity, however, the extension would provide the additional floorspace required to offset that lost within the neighbourhood centre and would also allow for the uses which have taken place in the nearby annex to be relocated within this one larger Community Centre. It is proposed that by extending the existing facility it will result in cost savings and community benefits.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 The application has been publicised by way of neighbour notification letters and the posting of a site notice. No response has been received.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire Highways

- 5.1.1 No comment.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the Development Plan

- 6.1.1 In the determination of planning applications development must be in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014);
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007); and
- The Stevenage District Plan Second Review 2004.

The Council has now commenced work on the new Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031. The draft version of the Plan was published in January 2016 and will be used as a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications registered on or after Wednesday 6 January 2016. The Site Specific Policies DPD, the draft Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan (AAP), the draft Old Town AAP, the Pond Close Development SPG, Stevenage West Master planning Principles SPG, the Gunnels Wood Supplementary Planning Document and the Interim Planning Policy Statement for Stevenage are no longer material considerations in the determination of all planning applications registered on or after Wednesday 6 January 2016.

- 6.1.2 Where a Development Plan Document has been submitted for examination but no representations have been made in respect of relevant policies, then considerable weight may be attached to those policies because of the strong possibility that they will be adopted. The converse may apply if there have been representations which oppose the policy. However, much will depend on the nature of those representations and whether there are representations in support of particular policies.

6.1.3 In considering the policy implications of any development proposal the Local Planning Authority will assess each case on its individual merits, however where there may be a conflict between policies in the existing Development Plan and policies in any emerging Development Plan Document, the adopted Development Plan policies currently continue to have greater weight.

6.2 Central Government Advice

6.2.1 In March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and in doing so it replaced many documents including all Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Annex 1 of the NPPF provides guidance on how existing local plan policies which have been prepared prior to the publication of the NPPF should be treated. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF applies which states that only due weight should be afforded to the relevant policies in the adopted local plan according to their degree of consistency with it.

6.2.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is itself a material consideration. Given that the advice that the weight to be given to relevant policies in the local plan will depend on their degree of consistency with the NPPF, it will be necessary in the determination of this application to assess the consistency of the relevant local plan policies with the NPPF. The NPPF applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.2.3 In addition to the NPPF advice in the National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) also needs to be taken into account. It states that, where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the application to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless otherwise specified.

6.3 Adopted District Plan

TW1: Sustainable Development;
TW9 – Quality in Design;
NC1 – Large Neighbourhood Centres;
SC2 – Social and Community Facilities;
T15: Car Parking Strategy;

6.4 Draft Local Plan

SP2 - Sustainable development in Stevenage;
SP8 – Good Design;
GD1 – High Quality Design
IT5: Parking and Access;
HC1 – District, local and neighbourhood centres;

6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

7 APPRAISAL

7.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are the acceptability of the proposal in land use policy terms, the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, impact upon neighbouring amenities, and parking provision.

7.2 Land Use Policy Considerations

7.2.1 The application site is located within the large neighbourhood centre of Filey Close as designated by Policy NC1 of the adopted local plan, wherein the provision and improvement of community facilities is encouraged. Policy SC2 is concerned with the Improvement of social and community facilities and recognizes that many of the community buildings in the town are beginning to age and, in view of this, supports in principle of their modernisation and improvement. Policy HC1 of the draft local plan reiterates the advice in the adopted local plan and supports proposals within neighbourhood centres which provide a range of facilities within them, including community facilities. Finally, the proposal accords with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which supports the promotion of healthy communities and to ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community. Having regard to these policies, the proposed scheme is considered to be acceptable in land use terms.

7.3 Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

7.3.1 The surrounding area is characterised by a variety of buildings, including the neighbourhood centre, the Tom Tiddlers public House, nearby flats and traditional residential dwellings. The extension is single storey and has been designed to integrate with the existing building. The roofs have been designed to complement the existing roof and design elements of the existing building. The café will be glass fronted and provide an attractive active frontage to the building when seen from the neighbourhood centre to the south. However, for security purposes it is likely that there will be a need to add some form of security shuttering to the extension, given the increase in glazed area in order to protect the café from vandalism. At present precise details of this have not been provided, however, this can be covered by an appropriately worded condition attached to any grant of planning permission. The extensions would have a limited range of visibility from surrounding roads. The main view point will be on the footpath that runs in front of the Community centre which faces south west. Although some of the green area to the front of the centre would be lost, as the design will integrate with the existing building it is not considered that the proposal would harm the visual amenities of the area.

7.4 Impact upon Neighbouring Amenities

7.4.1 The extensions will be built on the south western side and, therefore, away from the residential area of Scarborough Avenue to the north. There are flats above the shops to the south of the proposal but it is considered that the

development is far enough away not to cause any noise issues. The use of the Community Centre will remain the same and, therefore, there would be no adverse effect on any neighbouring amenity.

7.5 Parking

7.5.1 With regard to car parking, there will be no change to the existing full-time and part time staff employed at the centre. Dedicated car parking for the Community Centre is 9 cars, including one disabled space, with access from Filey Close to the south. The neighbourhood centre has public parking for 38 cars in close proximity to the Community Centre and a further 20 spaces within 60 metres. The Council's adopted car parking standards based on the new floor space to be created would require an additional 21 spaces (1 per 9 sqm). However, the applicant considers that the development is unlikely to generate a greater amount of traffic than the current use of the existing centre. As mentioned above, the Symonds Green Community Association previously used space in the nearby Neighbourhood Centre and the Scarborough Avenue Annex which is approximately 100 metres away. Therefore, users who previously reached the facilities without a car will not have such an increased journey that would necessitate a car being used. Policy T15 – Car Parking Strategy - advises keeping car parking to a minimum for non-residential developments. Parking for customers and visitors will only be provided "where communal public parking is not available nearby". As this proposal is most unlikely to attract more vehicles to the site and there is a good level of public parking available within the vicinity of the community centre, it is not considered that the absence of any additional parking provision will result in increased parking in adjoining streets. Furthermore, being a large neighbourhood centre, the site is also well served by public transport.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 In summary, the principle of the development is considered acceptable in that it would enhance an existing community facility in accordance with policy SC2 of the adopted plan, policy HC1 of the draft local plan and the advice contained within the NPPF. Further, the development would not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area or harm the amenities of nearby residential properties. Finally, it is not considered that the development would worsen car parking problems in the vicinity of the application site due to the availability of existing public car parking facilities.

8.2 Given the above, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions / reasons:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 061-C-001, 061-C-003 02, 061-C-003 03, 061-C-003 04, 061-C-003 06, 061-C-003 07, 061-C-003 08
REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 3 No development shall take place until a schedule and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.
- 4 No construction working relating to this permission shall be carried out on any Sunday, Public or Bank Holiday nor at any other time except between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 09:00 and 13:30 on Saturdays.
REASON:- To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- 5 Prior to the first occupation of the extension hereby permitted, precise details of any security measures to be applied to the fenestration of the new extension shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed measures shall thereafter be constructed in accordance with the approved details.
REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.

Pro-active statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through early engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

10 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991-2011.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Publication Draft 2016.
4. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 and the National Planning Policy Guidance 2014.

5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.