

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/24/96981

Site Address: ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH, ST JOHNS ROAD, HEDGE
END, SOUTHAMPTON, SO30 4AF

Case Officer: Gary Osmond

Description: To level the land with infill and erect an 8m x 12m stretched polycotton
canvas canopy.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Within the urban edge - Grade II Listed Building - Tree Preservation Order		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
F/05/54575 – Formation of pond with marsh garden and construction of timber boardwalk/viewing platform – Approved Sept 2005		
Z/31900/005/00 – Construction of extension and alterations to form church hall and ancillary accommodation, car parking and improved access from St. Johns Road – Approved Oct 1996		
Z/31900/001/00 – Construction of two storey extensions comprising church hall and ancillary accommodation – Approved Oct 1993		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	One representation of support received.		
Hedge End Town Council:	No Objection.		
Heritage:	No objection. St. John the Evangelist is a Grade II Listed Building. However, due to the position of the proposals, there will be no impact upon the setting of the church or its view from St John's Road.		
Ecology:	Whilst it is accepted that a 10% BNG improvement can be achieved, no specific details have been provided as to how this can be undertaken in the timescales suggested.		
Trees:	No objection subject to conditions.		
Environmental Health:	Whilst we do not oppose the principle of the development, we are concerned that insufficient detail of proposed activities and their potential impacts have been provided. As a result, we are unable to establish that impacts will be suitably managed by the proposed scheme in respect of contaminated land, air pollution, noise, odour and light.		

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 09/12/2024 – See separate photographs		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework, Dec 2024 Planning Practice Guidance

Development Plan:

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2 and S8; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM8, DM11, DM12, DM14 and DM36.

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals; Trees and Development.

Assessment:**Site Context:**

St John the Evangelist is a Grade II Listed Building lying on the corner of St John's Road and Church Lane. Dating from the 1870s, the main church fronts the street, with later modern extensions to the rear and behind the main building. To the rear is a tarmac car park, with further overflow parking behind the church which is gravel/hardcore. In the northern corner of the site is the former graveyard, which was turned into a nature garden with pond in around 2005. This northern corner of the site is screened from public views by dense planting and tree coverage.

The surrounding area is almost entirely residential in nature and made up of mainly detached single and two storey dwellings on reasonable size plots. The vast majority of these are much more recent in age than the church.

Proposals:

The application seeks consent for the erection of a permanent open marquee/tent/canopy structure to the rear of the church. This will involve filling in part of the previously constructed pond to create a level area on which to erect the structure. The structure is intended to be used for outdoor worship and other activities associated with the work of the church.

Policy & Principle:

The application site lies within the urban edge where the basic principle of development is considered to be acceptable. However, any formal planning approval will be dependent upon how well that proposed is considered to accord with the relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan and supplementary planning documents. The most relevant policies in this instance are DM1, DM12 and DM36.

Policy DM1 requires all new development to take appropriate account of the context of the site and that of the surrounding locality. It requires any impact upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and uses to be kept to a minimum or appropriately addressed and/or mitigated where necessary. Design needs to be of an appropriate standard and any natural features worthy of retention should be protected wherever possible.

Policy DM12 relates to heritage assets, which include nationally and locally listed buildings, as well as conservation areas. It states that development of a heritage asset or within its setting will be permitted provided it does not harm or detract from the significance or special interest of the asset, and sustains and enhances its special character and qualities. The more important the asset, the greater the weight that should be accorded to this criterion.

Policy DM36 relates to the provision of community, leisure and cultural facilities, where it encourages such uses to be located within town, district and local centres. For sites outside these centres but still within the urban edge – such as the application site – it must be demonstrated that: they are readily accessible; will not adversely impact designated local centres; and that there are no suitable alternative sites available within a local centre. In this instance, the marquee structure is intended to complement the existing church facilities and activities. As such, locating it away from the church site will not work. It is

also the case that the use of the structure will have no impact upon the commercial and community nature of Hedge End District Centre.

In principle therefore, that proposed is considered to be acceptable.

Layout, Form, Scale, Design, Street Scene & Area Character:

As set out above, the proposed marquee structure is to be positioned to the rear of the church within its former graveyard. This will necessitate levelling off the ground by importing soil and in filling an existing pond, which is currently somewhat overgrown. The marquee itself will be a 12m x 8 m heavyweight polycotton canvas canopy supported on timber poles. The whole structure will be anchored to the ground by 900mm stakes and heavy-duty ratchet straps. The canopy will be a 'sand' colour with the ground underneath finished in wood chippings. The canopy will be lower on the north-western side which faces the boundary shared with the neighbouring residential property - No.18 Church Lane. The other side facing the church will be more open.

In terms of form and scale, whilst sizable, that proposed will not be seen as large in comparison to the adjacent church and church centre. Equally, its position behind the buildings and trees will mean that it will have no visual impact upon the wider public realm in terms of the street scene or visual amenity of the locality. In these regards that proposed is considered to accord with Policy DM1.

Heritage:

Whilst not physically linked in any way to the listed church building or the later church centre, there is the potential for that proposed to impact the setting of the building. However, whilst within the grounds of the church, the canopy structure will be positioned far enough away and at a lower level, meaning that its impact upon the visual setting and character of the church will not be adversely impacted. It is also the case that the structure itself is of a 'temporary' nature, meaning that it can easily be dismantled without impacting upon the listed building. As such, the requirements of Policy DM12 are adhered to.

Amenity:

Some reservations have been raised by Environmental Health with regards to the exact nature of the use of that proposed. Their concern is that activities taking place in and around the canopy could result in unwanted disturbance from noise and lighting to neighbouring residential properties and the wider area. Without knowing exactly what activities are to take place and at what times, a holding objection remains.

These concerns have been raised with the church who have responded to say that the canopy is intended to be used for various purposes, mainly during the day, to complement existing activities and events. It is intended that its main use will be to compliment and encourage existing outdoor nature based activities, such as 'forest church', with occasional day time and evening events throughout the year.

Whilst the concerns raised relating to the lack of specific detail are understood, no issues have been raised by any neighbouring residential properties and it is not expected that the canopy will be used so often or in a manner which would cause any adverse disturbance as to warrant refusing the application or applying any specific restrictions upon its uses, such as the number or nature of events and times within which they can be held. Should any problems occur, there is other environmental health legislation which could be used to protect neighbouring properties.

On balance, it is not felt that the proposed canopy and its use is likely to result in any level of unacceptable disturbance. Notwithstanding, a condition is recommended restricting the use of the marquee/canopy and the area around it to ancillary activities directly associated with the church. It is considered that this will be sufficient to prevent unwanted impact upon neighbours whilst being flexible enough to allow the church to use the new facility, rather than applying specific restrictions on hours of use or what activities can and cannot take place. As such, it is considered to accord with the general amenity requirements of Policy DM1.

Parking & Highways:

Given that proposed is intended to complement existing activities at the church, rather than increase usage in any significant manner, it is not expected that there would be any noticeable highway impact. Equally, there would be no impact upon the parking provision, meaning that any overspill parking into surrounding streets will not increase.

Trees & Nature Conservation:

Provided the protection measures set out in the supporting arboricultural report and method statement are undertaken, there will be no impact upon any trees adjacent to the proposed canopy area. The recommended condition to this effect is to be included.

In terms of nature conservation, due to the size of the existing area to be impacted (over 25 sqm) the need for the development to provide a 10% biodiversity net gain comes into effect. An existing ecological survey of the site has been undertaken and recommendations made as to how the necessary net gain can be achieved. The supplied matrix shows that a 20% improvement can be achieved, although exact details of how this will be achieved, managed and monitored over the following 30 years has not been provided. However, this has been reviewed by the Council's Ecologist who is happy with the general recommendations and is content for the final details to be provided at a later date via condition.

Climate Change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030; (c) ensure that the Council's procurement policy recognises carbon neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 and the supporting Climate and Environment Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF, development plan and adopted local plan policy do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and local plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted local plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Local Plan and energy and water elements of the adopted Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD require development to be sustainable in terms of resource use, climate change and energy use. When considering the impact of climate change, the proposed development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change and is expected to reduce/limit impacts on climate emissions as a result of the development or its use.

Equalities Implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equality implications

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

This is a relatively minor development which will complement the existing activities of the church and should have no adverse impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties or the wider area. As such, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions relating to the following:

- Approved drawings;
- Commencement within three years;
- Tree protection measures;
- Canopy to only be used for activities associated with the church; and
- Details of how biodiversity net-gain will be achieved, managed and monitored.