

<b>ITEM:</b>		<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	REFUSAL
<b>REF NO:</b>	3PL/2018/1496/O	<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	Naomi Minto
<b>LOCATION:</b>	ATTLEBOROUGH Chapel 131 Hargham Road Attleborough	<b>APPNTYPE:</b>	Outline
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Christ Community Church Chapel, 131, Hargham Road Attleborough	<b>POLICY:</b>	In Settlemnt Bndry
<b>AGENT:</b>	D J Designs Ltd 1 Ferry Lane Postwick	<b>ALLOCATION:</b>	N
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Replace existing Church Hall with three detached bungalows		
		<b>CONS AREA:</b>	N
		<b>LB GRADE:</b>	N
		<b>TPO:</b>	N

#### REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

This application is referred to Planning Committee at the request of Cllr Martin.

#### KEY ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Impact upon amenity
- Highway safety
- Other matters

#### DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks Outline permission with all matters reserved for the erection of three dwellings on the site of an existing, in-use Church Hall. Whilst all matters are reserved, an indicative layout plan indicates three dwellings sited in a linear pattern along the southern boundary.

#### SITE AND LOCATION

The Chapel, also known as The Lighthouse, is situated at the junction of Hargham Road and Poplar Way, with residential development surrounding it. It's a modest, single storey building, which sits gable end facing onto Hargham Road. In addition, the site includes parking provision to the south of the existing building. The land lies within the defined Settlement Boundary of Attleborough. Access to the site would be via the existing access off Hargham Road (to the north west).

#### EIA REQUIRED

No

**RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

3PL/2018/0013/O                      Refusal                      06-06-18  
Replace existing Church Hall with three detached residential units

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**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

The following policies of the adopted Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies and the adopted Site Specific Policies and Proposals Document, including the Proposals Maps, have been taken into consideration in the determination of this application. The provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance have also been taken into account, where appropriate

**OBLIGATIONS/CIL**

Not applicable

**CONSULTATIONS**

**ATTLEBOROUGH TC**

Objection - Refuse in line with residents comments and concerns regarding Highways access. This is an important social Hub and the building is greatly needed; lack of community space was identified within the Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan; closure of the Hall will increase loss of available community space as the Methodist Church is also closing. Residents are looking at listing the building as a Community Asset.

**NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS**

No objection, subject to conditions.

**CONTAMINATED LAND OFFICER**

No objection, subject to conditions.

**TREE AND COUNTRYSIDE CONSULTANT**

No objection.

**REPRESENTATIONS**

A site notice was erected on 19 December 2018 and consultations issued on 12 December 2018. Twelve letters of representations were received, six objecting to the proposal, four in support and two making comments. A breakdown of the responses received is provided below;

**Objections**

- Loss of community facility - (polling station, coffee mornings, IT instruction, pre-school group, private hire etc). The need for housing does not outweigh the loss of a valued community facility
- Highway safety concerns - dangerous access / insufficient parking provision
- Use of ratepayers money to upgrade existing facilities

- Restrictive covenant in place in respect of the use of the site
- Adverse amenity impact - loss of privacy, increased noise disturbance - particularly for Nos. 32 and 33 Poplar Way.

#### Support

- Proposal, if approved, will enable the church to find a larger, more suitable premises, capable of increasing its offering to meet the needs of the growing town.

#### Comments

- The church has outgrown the current site and uses other facilities in town to accommodate certain functions. This application is being proposed to enable a larger, improved facility to be built elsewhere in town.

### ASSESSMENT NOTES

#### 1.0 Principle of development

1.1 An application for three detached dwellings was previously refused on this site (ref: 3PL/2018/0013/O) due to the loss of a community facility with no alternative provision proposed and no justification to show all reasonable steps were taken to retain/expand the hall's use. In addition, the hall had not been marketed for sale as a going concern. A second reason for refusal was provided advising that the application failed to adequately demonstrate that three dwellings could be accommodated within the site sensitively taking into account the existing form and character of development both along Hargham Road and Poplar Way. The previous application is therefore a material consideration in the assessment of the current application.

1.2 This application seeks Outline permission for the erection of three dwellings on the site of an existing chapel/place of worship/community facility. The site lies within the settlement boundary for Attleborough where normally the principle of residential development is acceptable provided the proposal is suitable in terms of appropriate density, mix and type. However, where the development results in the loss of a community facility, Policy DC18 is relevant. This Policy states in part:

Key local services and facilities will be protected from proposals for development that would result in the loss of that key service or facility. Proposals for the redevelopment of a key local facility will not be permitted unless:

- adequate alternative provision is available within or adjacent to the settlement or will be provided as part of the development process;
- all reasonable efforts have been made to preserve the facility or service but the service is no longer considered viable;
- the service or facility is in an inherently unsustainable location and the reuse of the site would be a more sustainable solution than the retention of the service or facility.

1.3 In terms of point a, the application is supported by a Design and Access (D&A) Statement, which advises that the church purchased the site 6 years ago as a base from which they could establish themselves, with a medium to longer term view of expanding to larger facilities. The D&A Statement advises that the purpose of this Outline application is to secure the change of use of the site to enable residential development, which in turn would enhance the value of the land and aid the funding required to create a new facility offering improved accommodation and providing an enhanced facility to the people of Attleborough. The D&A Statement further advises that the church's only source of funding is through increasing the value of the

existing facility. The applicant has advised that the sale of the current site is key to the church being able to purchase a new site. The application is supported by members of the public who have submitted comments in support of the application. If permission is granted the church activities currently held in the building would be temporarily relocated to other venues within Attleborough. Some alternative locations that could be hired include, the Town Hall, Connaught Hall, Francis Room, Scout Hut and the Community Hub. However, no material has been submitted (such as confirmation letters from the relevant venues) to demonstrate that they could or would be able to accommodate the church's existing activities until a replacement facility has been established within or adjacent to the town. Without confirmation from other venues to say otherwise, the information provided as part of this application is considered aspirational.

1.4 In terms of point b, the applicant has submitted an addendum to the Design and Access Statement, which provides further detail regarding the building's current size and use and the future requirements of the church. It is advised that the current building is unsustainable. At present the hall can accommodate approximately 100 worshipers. However, the church is expanding and looking to double its numbers. Further, there is currently one break out room for separate activities within the building. The room itself effectively forms a passage/link between the main hall and the office. As part of the church's expansion plans, they would like to be able to provide three breakout rooms that are self contained and able to be used privately and independently of other activities within the church building. In addition, the church currently employs six staff members, with provision of four volunteers. However, it is envisaged that accommodation for between 10-12 employees will be needed in the future. The addendum states that the overall site is approximately 1093m.sq and therefore in order to accommodate the space requirements for future growth, 36% of the site would need to be given over to enable an extension, with the remainder landscaped and used for parking provision, although parking would be significantly reduced, which would be unacceptable as it would likely lead to highway safety issues along Hargham Road and Polar Way.

1.5 On the basis of the information provided, it is accepted that the applicant has considered alternative solutions in terms of retaining the facility in this location. Whilst an extension to the current building and re-alteration of its existing internal layout may address issues currently experienced by the church, it would likely lead to an adverse impact in terms of highway safety, when taking account of reduced parking provision, particularly in terms of special events, such as batisms, when people often travel from further afield to attend such events. Furthermore, the applicant has provided photographs which show how events, such as batisms effect the current parking provision, which is more than what would be available if the current building was extended.

1.6 In terms of point c, the building is located within the defined settlement boundary of Attleborough, which is defined as a market town within the adopted Core Strategy. It is therefore considered that the site is located within a sustainable location, in easy walking / cycling distance to many nearby properties. In addition, there is a regular bus service, which stops in close proximity of the site, with additional stops throughout Attleborough a further afield.

1.7 In light of the above, whilst it is recognised that this application has gone some way to address the points of Policy DC18, it does not meet all of the criteria and based on the information available there is no firm guarantee, that once the site is sold for housing development, the church will be able to find a suitable alternative location within Attleborough. Potentially the church could relocate away from Attleborough and the existing community facility would be lost as it is not possible to put any safeguarding in place by way of a condition. In light of the above, the proposal is contrary to Policy DC18 of the adopted Core Strategy and paragraph 83 of the NPPF.

2.0 Impact on the character and appearance of the area

2.1 Policy DC16 requires all new development to achieve the highest standard of design. As part of this, all design proposals must preserve or enhance the existing character of an area. Consideration will also be given to the density of buildings in a particular area and the landscape/townscape effect of any increased density.

2.2 The application has been submitted in Outline with all matters reserved therefore layout, scale and specific design points will be dealt with at the reserved matters stage. Notwithstanding this, an indicative layout plan has been provided to show how the dwellings might sit on site. In addition, the D&A Statement indicates that the dwellings would be detached bungalows. Whilst bungalows would be considered more favourable and in keeping with the existing built form directly adjacent to the site, the layout as indicated, particularly the parking arrangement, would not be in keeping with the character and appearance of existing residential development within the immediate area.

### 3.0 Impact upon amenity

3.1 Policy DC1 of the adopted Core Strategy seeks to protect residential amenity and that all new development must have regard to amenity considerations. It states that development will not be permitted where there are unacceptable effects on the amenity of neighbouring residents and future occupants.

3.2 As already mentioned, the application is submitted in Outline form only with all matters reserved. Notwithstanding this, the application is accompanied with details indicating the development would consist of three detached single storey dwellings. There have been objections raised in respect of the loss of privacy and noise disturbance to existing neighbouring dwellings. However, single storey dwellings are considered more acceptable in this location and are unlikely to lead to a loss of privacy, subject to suitably designed dwellings, which would be considered as part of a reserved matters application. In addition, it is considered that the site could potentially accommodate 2-3 dwellings with sufficient private amenity space and if developed well, without undue noise disturbance to existing and future residents.

### 4.0 Highway safety

4.1 Policy CP4 of the Core strategy seeks to ensure that all access and safety concerns are resolved in new developments. Policy DC19 requires sufficient Parking for all new development. The Highway Authority considers that whilst the layout is only indicative, they have concerns regarding the proposal to provide a communal car parking, which is remote from the two south easterly plots. The Highway Authority consider that residents of these properties would be likely to leave their cars in the highway outside their dwellings, most likely straddling the footway or parked on the wide grass verge, which would be unacceptable.

4.2 The Highway Authority advised that they would require all plots to have their own on site parking and turning facilities. In addition, a minimum visibility of 2.4m x 59m must be preserved to the east of the junction of Poplar Way with Hargham Road. No objection was raised, subject to the reserved matters application dealing with visibility, access, parking and turning arrangements.

### 5.0 Other matters

5.1 The Contaminated Land Officer raised no objection to the proposal, subject to the inclusion of a condition relating to unexpected contamination and provision of an informative in respect of extensions.

5.2 No objection was raised by the Tree and Countryside Officer to the proposal.

### 6.0 Conclusion

6.1 In terms of the overall planning balance of the scheme, the application as it is proposes the loss of a community facility with no plans firmly in place to secure a replacement, contrary to Policy DC18 of the adopted Core Strategy and in line with paragraph 83 of the NPPF (2019). The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

<b>REASON(S) FOR REFUSAL</b>
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**Non-std reason for refusal**

The proposal seeks the loss of a community facility in the Town of Attleborough. No alternative provision has been shown to be guaranteed as part of the proposal and no information has been submitted to indicate that the facility has been marketed for sale as a community facility. As a result, the proposal fails to meet the requirements of Policy DC18 of the adopted Core Strategy, nor does it meet the guidance of paragraph 83 of the NPPF (2019).