

OFFICER REPORT FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

APPLICATION NO: P1969.20

WARD: Romford Town **Date Received:** 30th December 2020

ADDRESS: 9 Bridge Close
Romford

PROPOSAL: Retrospective change of use from Use Class B1 to Use Class D1 - a Place of Worship and Assembly

DRAWING NO(S): A4_PL_01 Revision B
A3_PL_02 Revision C
A3_PL_03 Revision R1
A3_PL_04
A3_PL_05 Revision B

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that **planning permission be GRANTED** subject to the condition(s) given at the end of the report

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to the property at 9 Bridge Close, Romford which comprises a two storey detached building in use for a place of worship and assembly (Use Class D1) by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG).

Permission to use the building was given by virtue of an enforcement notice appeal, with the temporary period expiring on 31/12/2014.

The site is located in the Romford Metropolitan Centre, a Strategic Development Area and the Site Specific Allocation of the Havering Local Plan.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The application seeks consent for a retrospective change of use from B1 to D1 - a Place of Worship and Assembly. The change of use was completed on 31/12/2014.

According to the supporting statement, the operating hours are:

Sunday: 9:00am-1.30pm

Wednesday/Thursday: 7:00pm-8.30pm

The Case Officer contacted the agent to ascertain the operating hours/days of the church, as there was conflicting information on the application form and the supporting statement. The agent has

confirmed via email that: "The actual opening times are as shown on the applicant Support Statement 2021-07-21. These are the days times the church uses although the facility is open for them every day. It is only those days that the church uses and has ever used. They don't use it in the other days as there is no need".

According to the supporting statement, the RCCG has a membership of approximately 50 people (including children).

RELEVANT HISTORY

Q0308.19	Discharge of Condition 6 of P0246.19 DOC NO Discharge 05-05-2020
Q0309.19	Discharge of Condition 7 of P0246.19 Withdrawn 18-05-2020
P0246.19	Retrospective change of use from B1 to D1 - a Place of Worship and Assembly Apprv with cons 23-05-2019
E0035.18	The premises are in use as a Place of Worship and Assembly. Withdrawn - Invalid 19-02-2019
Q0273.12	Discharge of conditions 6 and 7 of Appeal Decision APP/B5480/C/11/2155463. DOC Discharge PART 18-02-2013
P1647.10	Temporary Change of Use from B1, B8 to B1 and D1. The proposed use is for planning conferences seminars use. Use by faith organisation and light private function on the ground floor only Withdrawn - Invalid 01-02-2012
P1400.09	Temporary change of use from B1 to D1 Refuse 26-11-2009

CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS

Neighbour notification letters were sent out to 22 properties. No letters of representation have been received.

Public Protection - No concerns in terms of noise and land contamination.

Fire Brigade - The Commissioner is satisfied with the proposals in regards to fire brigade access and water supplies. No additional hydrants are required.

The Council's Highway Authority was consulted but no response was received.

RELEVANT POLICIES

Romford site allocation ROMSSA2 (Bridge Close) of the Romford Area Action Plan Development Plan Document

Policies 1 (Romford Strategic Development Area), 7 (Residential design and amenity), 13 (Town centre development), 16 (Social infrastructure), 23 (Transport Connections), 24 (Parking provision and design), 35 (Waste management) of the Havering Local Plan.

Policies D14 (Noise), S1 (Developing London's social infrastructure), T4 (Assessing and mitigating transport impacts), T5 (Cycling), T6 (Car parking) of the London Plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework

MAYORAL CIL IMPLICATIONS

No new floorspace is to be created so the development is not CIL liable.

STAFF COMMENTS

In accordance with the current criteria for site visits, an in-person site visit was not undertaken. Photos were not provided by the agent. In determining this planning application photos, Google StreetView TM, aerial view images and submitted drawings were used to assess the site constraints.

The main issues arising from this application are the principle of the development, impact on residential amenity and highway/parking.

BACKGROUND

Planning permission for the temporary use of this building as a place of worship and assembly was granted through an enforcement appeal in 2011 with a three year permission to the end of 2014. This decision followed planning application, P1400.09, which was refused. The main issues were insufficient on site parking and noise and disturbance caused by the nature of the proposed use in conjunction with the proposed operating hours, particularly during the evening hours and on Sundays and Bank Holidays, be unacceptably detrimental to the amenities of occupiers of adjacent properties.

In the appeal decision, the Inspector took account of these policy proposals and the likely timescale for their implementation. He considered that a temporary permission would allow the situation to be kept under review. The Inspector was of the view that there is room on the site for at least twenty vehicles and providing these spaces are retained, the use of the premises as a place of worship and assembly should not result in on-street parking detrimental to pedestrian and highway safety.

There is an enforcement case, reference ENF/160/17 1. for an alleged breach of condition 1 of appeal reference APP/B5480/C/11/2155463 Use should cease in 2014,
2. Condition 7 (Cycle Store) never discharged - details were considered insufficient under Q0273.12

and 3. Refuse store not erected, which is under investigation.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The Havering Local Plan 2016-2031 states that the Employment Land Review has advised that 24 ha of employment land can be released over the Plan period. The previously designated land recommended for release includes 1.4 ha at Bridge Close, Romford. The de-designation of these sites will facilitate the delivery of new residential developments and make a significant contribution towards meeting the borough's housing need.

The site is located in the Strategic Development Area and the Site Specific Allocation of the Havering Local Plan. The Council has set out its vision for the regeneration of Bridge Close to provide a residential-led, mixed-use scheme with up to 1070 new homes, a primary school, a health centre, a community centre, a new pedestrian and cycle bridge as well as extensive investment in the public realm, including the naturalisation of the River Rom.

No extant proposals for the comprehensive re-development of the site have yet come forward and as such the application, before the Local Planning Authority, needs to be assessed on its individual merits with the caveat that it should not prejudice the future re-development of the site.

The justification for Policy 16 (Social infrastructure) states that town centres and the borough's Strategic Development Areas are the preferred location for new social infrastructure as the increased and changing population in these areas trigger the need for additional facilities. However, this cannot always be achieved as provision in some facilities lend themselves to be located in existing residential areas. It should be demonstrated that adverse impacts are appropriately mitigated where facilities generate movement and potentially affect the residential character and amenity of the area. The site is located in the Romford Metropolitan Centre.

The principle of the temporary use of the building was considered acceptable when planning permission was granted on appeal. There have been no material changes in the planning circumstances and a further temporary permission for the use is considered acceptable in principle.

As there are no firm proposals for the redevelopment of the Bridge Close site in accordance with the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031, it is considered that a temporary permission would be appropriate. It is considered that the use of the building should not continue beyond 1st April 2025, otherwise it could impact on the overall redevelopment of Bridge Close.

IMPACT ON AMENITY

The main impacts concern noise from the use, in particular from amplified sound, including music and microphones. Having reviewed the application and database records, there are no recent complaints concerning noise from the venue. The Council's Public Protection Department has no objection to the planning permission being granted.

The planning inspector considered the noise impact and noted that the premises are in an employment area and back onto a railway embankment, but there are houses nearby in Waterloo Road. The appeal decision stated that "Steps have been taken to mitigate the outbreak of noise by

installing internal cladding to the walls and windows of the premises and technical controls exist for regulating the output from the amplification equipment. Residents of Waterloo Road experience a relatively high level of background noise due to the location of the houses on a main road and the proximity of the railway line and the employment area". The Inspector concluded that all the concerns arising from their assessment of the main issues in the appeal can be controlled by planning conditions.

Subject to re-imposing the conditions from the appeal, including the retention of the existing sound insulation against internally-generated noise, no doors, windows or other openings shall be constructed in the premises and the existing apparatus for the control of sound-amplification equipment shall be retained and shall be operated whenever the sound-amplification equipment is in use, Staff consider that the use is not materially harmful to neighbouring amenity.

The supporting statement states that the operating hours are Sunday: 9:00am-1.30pm and Wednesday/Thursday: 7:00pm-8.30pm. The Case Officer contacted the agent to ascertain the operating hours/days of the church, as there was conflicting information on the application form and the supporting statement. The agent has confirmed via email that: "The actual opening times are as shown on the applicant Support Statement 2021-07-21. These are the days times the church uses although the facility is open for them every day. It is only those days that the church uses and has ever used. They don't use it in the other days as there is no need". The operating hours outlined above have been secured by condition to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties.

HIGHWAY/PARKING

The original block plan showed 25 car parking spaces. During the course of the application, it was noted that temporary planning permission was granted for the variation of condition 2 of planning permission P0317.18 to allow (in addition to the permitted extended hours during Ramadan) the use of the premises between the hours of 06:00 - 21:30 during October to February and 04:00 - 23:30 during March to September at No. 91 Waterloo Road, which is used as a Mosque and also utilised the car parking areas 1 & 2 shown on for this proposal. The agent had originally confirmed via email that No.'s 91 Waterloo Road and 9 Bridge Close are owned by the same landlord, who has given the applicant full access to car parking areas 1 & 2, which explains why they also formed part of this application.

During the course of the application, the Case Officer asked the agent to amend the Site Location Plan to include and outline in red the 8 car parking spaces (which corresponds with Drawing No.'s A3_PL_02 Revision C and A4_PL_05 Revision B). A revised block plan was submitted, which shows a total of 8 car parking spaces for this application. The supporting statement states that members travel to the church in their personal vehicles and numerous families take public transport to the church premises. The eight car parking spaces accommodates eight of the members' vehicles. According to the supporting statement, they have permission from the landlord (Havering Islamic Cultural Centre) to make use of their car park during church services, although this car park has been removed from the proposed site location plan and therefore, cannot be taken into account during the assessment of this application.

In respect of the enforcement appeal, the Inspector noted that LDF Policies CP8 and DC26 do not require community facilities to have any off-street parking and DC33 (Annex 5) does not refer specifically to places of worship, although it sets a maximum of one space per 4 square metres for

church halls.

The application site is close to Romford Town Centre and is well served by public transport, including Romford Station with good links to much of the surrounding urban area. The Council's Highway Authority was consulted but no response was received.

The car parking arrangements were covered by a condition included in the Inspector's decision and it is recommended that this be amended to include the car parking area to the front of the site and re-imposed. This requires the existing parking areas to the front of the premises to be retained and be kept available at all times for the parking of vehicles used by the occupiers of the premises and their visitors and shall not be used for any other purpose. Given the limited hours of use and subject to the condition previously imposed, the proposal is considered acceptable in highway terms.

KEY ISSUES/CONCLUSIONS

As the regeneration of Bridge Close is expected to commence in early 2025 according to the current programme in accordance with the Romford Town Centre Development Framework and the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031, it is considered that a further temporary permission would be appropriate. Given that there are plans to redevelop the site for housing, it is considered that a further temporary consent until 1st April 2025 is considered reasonable. Subject to appropriate conditions with regards to car parking and noise impacts the use is considered acceptable in this locality for a further period. Temporary permission is recommended accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that **planning permission be GRANTED** subject to the following condition(s)

1 SC17 (Temporary use)

The use of the premises as a place of worship and assembly shall be for a limited period only expiring on 1st April 2025 on or before which date the use shall cease.

Reason:

To enable the Local Planning Authority to review the situation regarding the progress of proposals for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site arising under Policy 1 of the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031.

2 SC22 (Hours of operation)

The use of the premises as a place of worship and assembly shall not take place other than between 19:00 and 20:30 on Wednesdays and Thursdays and 09:00 and 13:30 on Sundays.

Reason:-

To minimise the impact of the development on the surrounding area in the interests of amenity, and that the development accords with Policies 7 and 16 of the Havering Local Plan.

3 Parking areas

The existing parking area at the front of the premises shall be retained and shall be kept available at all times for the parking of vehicles used by the occupiers of the premises and their visitors and shall not be used for any other purpose.

Reason:

To ensure that adequate car parking provision is made off street in the interests of highway safety.

4 Existing sound insulation

The existing sound insulation against internally-generated noise shall be retained and, notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order), no doors, windows or other openings shall be constructed in the premises.

Reason:

To minimise the impact from noise arising from the development on the surrounding area in the interests of amenity, and that the development accords with Policy 7 of the Havering Local Plan.

5 Control of sound-amplification equipment

The existing apparatus for the control of sound-amplification equipment shall be retained and shall be operated whenever sound-amplification equipment is in use. Sound-amplification equipment shall not be operated within the premises so as to generate noise that is audible within any residential curtilage in Waterloo Road.

Reason:

To minimise the impact from noise arising from the development on the surrounding area in the interests of amenity, and that the development accords with Policy 7 of the Havering Local Plan.

6 Cycle storage

If, within two months of the date of this decision notice, details of the facilities to be provided within the site for the storage of cycles have not been submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority for their written approval and if the facilities are not provided in accordance with the approved details within three months of the approval of details, the use of the premises as a place of worship and assembly shall cease until such time as the facilities are approved and provided. If no details are approved within twelve months of this decision notice, the use of the premises as a place of worship and assembly shall cease until such time as the facilities are provided in accordance with the approved details. The facilities provided shall be retained as approved.

Reason:

Insufficient information has been supplied with the application to demonstrate what facilities will be available for cycle parking. Submission of this detail within one month of the date of this

decision notice is in the interests of providing a wide range of facilities for non-motor car residents and sustainability.

7 Refuse and recycling

The refuse and recycling stores shall be provided in accordance with the details as previously approved under application Q0273.12 and be permanently retained thereafter.

Reason: To protect the amenity of occupiers of the development and also the locality generally.

INFORMATIVES

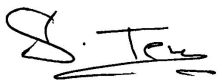
1 Approval following revision

Statement Required by Article 35 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015: In accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework, improvements required to make the proposal acceptable were negotiated with the agent on the telephone on 14th September 2023. The revisions involved outlining the car parking spaces on the Site Location Plan. The amendments were subsequently submitted on 15th September 2023.

2 Fee Informative

A fee is required when submitting details pursuant to the discharge of conditions. In order to comply with the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) Regulations 2012, (as amended), a fee of £116 per request or £34 where the related permission was for extending or altering a dwellinghouse, is needed.

Authorising Officer:



Suzanne Terry

10th October 2023