

Responses to GBC Highways Officer comments:-

The car park at Chalk Village is often busy and much of the vehicle parking would not appear to be related to activities at the Parish Hall.

See point 2 below. The Council insisted that the car park should be free for public access use

At drop off and collection times, the existing pre-school use results in vehicles parking on street, in controlled areas and on pavements, to the detriment of pedestrians and highway safety.

This application is for the use of part of the upper floor to create an office and a meeting room where those activities already take place within the Parish Hall. It has nothing to do with the existing pre-school activity. The Parochial Church Council has no power to prevent anyone who drops off children or posts a letter from parking on yellow lines or the pavement. That is a matter for the Council's traffic wardens to enforce.

The car park markings showing seven spaces reserved for village hall use, have not been maintained over time. Google Street View images show the markings clearly in July 2016 but not being there in May 2023.

See point 1 below. I would add that, from my own viewing of the May 2023 Google Street View images, the car park bay markings are still clearly visible.

The proposal would transfer existing uses to the first floor area and would make available existing space for alternative uses. The proposed office would introduce new people and visitors to the application site. Although the proposal would not be a significant traffic generator, adequate vehicle parking should be available to ensure that the highway is free from parked vehicles.

See my Planning Statement which specifically states that the proposed meeting room and office are for those activities that already take place in the Parish Hall. There will be no intensification of those uses.

Four additional car parking spaces and a minimum of two cycle parking spaces should be provided for the proposed first floor use, as well as the original parking provision for hall users (7 spaces) being maintained.

See my note immediately above. There is no need to provide additional parking for activities that already take place in the Parish Hall.

Concerns are raised that without suitable vehicle parking being provided and without adequate restrictions/enforcement of the car park, the proposed development would be detrimental to highway safety.

See my note immediately above. There is no need to provide additional parking for activities that already take place in the Parish Hall.

Responses to case officer questions

1 Are seven spaces within the car park currently reserved for the use of Church Hall visitors only?

Technically, yes, although the desired repainting has been delayed until the work to build the new houses behind the car park is complete - that work is impinging on the car park so that the re-painting of lines and words on the car park surface would be more difficult now and potentially degraded unnecessarily early.

2 How is parking in the car park controlled/enforced at present and how would this change as a result of this development?

The Council when granting us the lease insisted that that the car park should be free for public access use (specifically preventing us from charging) but allowed us to reserve 7 places for Hall users.

3 Could additional spaces be reserved within the car park for users of the proposed office and meeting room?

Yes, although the current difficulties of folk using car park spaces allocated to the Hall could remain. If the Council did grant us permission for this change of use we could investigate further ways of reserving spaces such as removable barriers in front of the designated spaces. Although, it would mean that when the Hall was not in use, those 'Hall' spaces would not be available for local residents and visitors to the small parade of shops, which on balance seems a loss to the community.

4 Could cycle parking be provided?

Yes, but this is more easily and informally already available on the forecourt of the Parish Hall and would detract from the provision of car parking. (The Vicar sometimes parks his bike there.)

5 Please provide an existing and proposed parking plan.

I attach my drawing number 542/08 which shows the layout of the existing car park. As the car park will not change, there is no need for me to prepare a proposed car park layout. The garage area behind (to the south) of the car park has been entirely demolished in preparation for the building of four town houses - the builders are using parts of the car park at the moment. The spaces marked 9,10 and 11, are earmarked for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points (at the suggestion of the Council). It is essentially agreed in principle but it is awaiting legal work to make sure everything works for all parties - not sure if this will take just two spaces or all three. Do we want to go down the road of having removable barriers i.e. lockable posts and more spaces allocated to the Hall? If so, there is an expense involved and it might not be popular, (see point 3 above) but it probably makes sense to have them as the ones somehow nearest to the Hall.

6 Please provide details of the hours of operation for the office and the meeting room.

The Meeting Room might be in use for three hours a week (c.1 hour during the working day - probably Wednesday 10.30-11.30am, and c.2 hours in the evening - probably Thursday 7-9pm).

7 Please set out how many persons would use the office and over what times.

Only 1 or 2 people would normally be in the office at any one time. The people who would use it are volunteers and would be doing administration, planning, printing leaflets etc in the hours it suited them - this is likely to be no more than 4 hours a week.

8 Where are the existing offices for the hall manager and the curate?

We don't always have a curate (we have only had one for 6 of the last 25 years). The current curate is part time and only works for us - unpaid - Sundays and Wednesdays. As an office base, he mostly works from home on the Isle of Sheppey (this will continue) but occasionally he needs his own base in the parish (i.e. the Parish Hall) where he can work on sermons etc

between visitng people and taking occasional services on (usually) Wednesdays and Sundays. Like the Hall Manager when he needs a flat surface he can use the large table in the foyer of the Parish Hall. The Hall Manager has an addiftonal large walk-in cupboard to store all the maintenance items that he needs. There is currently a photocopier at the Vicarage in Chalk village where photocopies for posters etc can be made but it would be befter if a copier was based at the Hall for the Hall Manager & curate.