

Consideration of proposal to remove Milton Mount Hall in respect of community & social planning policies

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS10: Physical and Social Infrastructure

5.4.11 Support will be given to proposals and activities that protect, retain or enhance existing physical and social infrastructure, or lead to the provision of additional infrastructure that improves community well-being. *Where there is the threat of loss of existing infrastructure, consideration will be given to viability and whether sufficient alternative provision is available.*

NPPF (2021) Chapter 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities

93. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;

c) *guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*

95. It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and

b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

Relevance to policies

Milton Mount Hall was built as a Church Hall in the 1960s and was used for various community activities until its closure in 2020. It had several users until early 2020, when the only remaining occupant was the Sunflower Nursery. The 'Infrastructure Delivery Schedule' of the Core Strategy states that in Gravesend town centre, additional Primary School places should be provided through school extensions. No mention is made of pre-school education, so the Policy assumption is that pre-school places will be provided by the private sector and existing schools. Any Policy issue is therefore the loss of a general community facility rather than specifically a nursery school. Sunflower Nursery vacated the site in August 2020.

Viability of existing premises

A major factor in the decision of St Paul's United Reformed Church to close their hall and sell the site was the expense of maintaining it. Set against the diminishing income this became an overriding consideration in 2019, when only the nursery remained, and the pandemic 'lockdown' in 2020 meant they were no longer able to pay for the space, so all income available for upkeep disappeared. Due to historic lack of financial viability, no major maintenance has been undertaken for 26 years. The prospect of other community uses being able to fund the maintenance now required is negligible. The condition of the building and costs to maintain it are described in more detail in Appendix A.

The financial viability of re letting the hall is considered in the Sealeys (commercial Agent) report, Appendix C.

Marketing of existing premises

The lack of interest in the continued use as a community facility is described in the marketing report from Caxtons, Appendix B.

Alternative Community facilities

The non viability of maintaining the Hall as a community facility is compounded by the existence of many alternative local premises that have multiple funding, allowing them to host community uses either freely, or at a reasonable cost. This is not an option on the Milton Mount site and hall, which has neither the space or character to attract the range of uses that would make it a viable. The following is a list of premises with halls available for community use:

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- Bartellas Restaurant and BarBartellas Restaurant and Bar, Hook Green, Wrotham Road,
Best Western Manor HotelBest Western Manor Hotel, Hever Court Road, Singlewell,
Cascades Leisure CentreCascades Leisure Centre, Thong Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 4LG
Chalk Parish HallChalk Parish Hall, Pirrip Close, Chalk, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2ND
Christ Church Hall, 48 Old Rd East, Gravesend DA12 1NRChrist Church Hall, 48 Old Rd East, Gravesend DA12 1NR
Clarendon royal hotel gravesendClarendon Royal Hotel, Royal Pier Road, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BE
Culverstone Community CentreCulverstone Community Centre, White Post Lane, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0TN
Darnley ArmsDarnley Arms, 40 The Street, Cobham, Gravesend, Kent DA12 3BZ
Elite Venue, Dunkirk Close, GravesendElite Venue, Dunkirk Close, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5ND
George Inn, Wrotham Road, MeophamGeorge Inn, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0AH
Gravesend Conservative Club, 193 Parrock St, Gravesend DA12 1EWGravesend Conservative Club, 193 Parrock St,
Gravesend Cricket Club, The Bat & Ball Ground, Wrotham Rd, Gravesend DA11 0QP
ham Memorial HallHigham Memorial Hall, School Lane, Higham, Rochester, Kent ME3 7JL
Inn on the Lake HotelInn on the Lake Hotel. Watling St, Shorne, Gravesend DA12 3HB
ead Rise Community CentreIstead Rise Community Centre, Worcester Close, Istead Rise, Gravesend, Kent DA13 9LB
Kent Tuition Hub, 26-28 Queen Street, Gravesend DA12 2EEKent Tuition Hub, 26-28 Queen Street, Gravesend DA12 2EE
meopham village hallMeopham Village Hall, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0AT
Mid Kent Golf ClubMid Kent Golf Club, Singlewell Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 7RB
Old Gravesendians Rugby Football Club, Bronte View, Gravesend DA12 1PX
Perry Street Conservative Club, 2 Perry Street, Northfleet DA11 8QUPerry Street
Prince of Orange, 1 Old Rd E, Gravesend DA12 1NJPrince of Orange,
Riverside Community Centre GravesendRiverside Community Centre, Dickens Road, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2JY
Riverview Park Scouts Hall, Riverview Manor, Wouldham Road, Gravesend ME1 3TLRiverview Park Scouts Hall,
Ruckland banqueting suitesRuckland Banqueting Suites, The Ruckland Rooms, 25 Wrotham Road, Gravesend, Kent DA110PA
Shorne Village HallShorne Village Hall, 16 The Street, Shorne, Gravesend DA12 3EA
Southern Valley Golf CourseSouthern Valley Golf Course, Thong Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 4LT
The Ascot ArmsThe Ascot Arms, Central Avenue, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5AW
The Bat & Ball, 113 Wrotham Rd, Gravesend DA11 0QP
The Gravesend Masonic Hall, 25 Wrotham Rd, Gravesend DA11 0PA
The Kings Arms Restaurant, Wrotham Road, Meopham Green
The Old Town Hall, High Street, GravesendThe Old Town Hall, High Street, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0AZ
The WoodvilleThe Woodville, Woodville Place, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1DD
Viewpoint ClubViewpoint Club, Thong Lane/Cervia Way, Gravesend, Kent DA12 4L

Holy Family Church Hall, Gravesend
Leather Bottle Hotel, Cobham
Legends Sports Club, Gravesend
Manor Farm Barn, Southfleet
Milton Social Club, Gravesend
Nursted Court, Meopham
Prince Albert, Gravesend
Regans Bar, Gravesend
Rochester And Cobham Park Golf Club
St Aidan's Church Hall, Gravesend
The Cricketers Inn, Meopham
The Granby Hotel, Northfleet
The Knowle Country House, Higham
The Meadow Room, Cobham
The Railway Inn, Sole Street, Meopham
The Three Daws, Gravesend
The Woodlands, Gravesend
Veterans Hall, Gravesend

Alternative Pre-school facilities

There is no policy requirement to specifically maintain pre school education on the site, which has been in general community use. It was the loss of other uses that has proved it to be non viable as a community hall. The following is a list of current alternative nursery education facilities, although these change as the private providers respond to changes in demand:



1. Bronte Nursery
Day Nursery

2. Bright Beginnings
Day Nursery

3. Westcourt Primary & Nursery School Academy
Academy Nursery 1.17 miles from Gravesend, Kent

4. St Aidans Nursery
Preschool

5. Whitehill Primary School Academy
Academy Nursery 1.26 miles from Gravesend, Kent

6. Northfleet Nursery School (Maintained)
Maintained Nursery 1.39 miles from Gravesend, Kent

7. Copperfield Academy
Academy Nursery 1.44 miles from Gravesend, Kent

8. Tymberwood Academy
Academy Nursery 1.65 miles from Gravesend, Kent

9. After-School Club at Shears Green Infant School
Out Of School Club - After School 1.74 miles from Gravesend

10. Busy Bees Day Nursery at Gravesend
Day Nursery

Other pre-school facilities listed nearby:

- little angels day nursery gravesend

scallywags nursery gravesend

smart day nursery gravesend

little explorers nursery gravesend

st aidans nursery gravesend

Appendix A - condition of existing building

The building has had specialist surveys in respect of structure, fabric, finishes and services, with estimates copied below.

Structure & Fabric

There are no apparent major defects structurally, although water ingress may have caused or be the cause of some movement - (see ATSPACE survey notes below). The fabric is sub standard, as evidenced by the EPC rating of F, which prevents the re-let without improvements. Upgrading the insulation will require the replacment of the roofs, which need to be insulated externally to ensure they do not suffer from condensation and lack of ventilation. The cost of this is estimated at £160,687 (The Roof people).

Finishes.

Generally poor, and damaged in places by water ingress. The cost of providing an acceptable level of finish for letting has not been assessed.

Services

Electricity supplies the heating and lighting. An electrical survey has resulted in the installation being condemned and isolated. The supply is inadequate for the appliances it serves. The estimated cost to make it safe is £31,200 (CJD Electrical services).

Total cost of repairs to building to re-let

The sum of the above expenses is £191,887

Additional costs

The sums above do not account for the drive widening, demolition of the huts to the rear, and formation of a car park to serve the hall, which are deemed as necessary to allow re-letting (see Appendices B & C).

The applicant, Wakes, have costed this work, (which is required for their redevelopment proposals), at £120,000.

The finishing of the building and grounds would likely take a further £20,000.

This adds a further 7 years to the 9.59 years payback estimated by Sealeys (appendix C). Investing 16.59 years income prior to being able to realistically attract a user is not a commercially viable proposition.

ROOF WORKS QUOTATION
MILTON MOUNT HALL

TO: WAKES CONTRACTS LTD
ATTN OF: GRAHAM WAKEMAN
FROM: JIM LYE
DATE: 12/10/2021



ROOF WORKS TOTAL					160,687.30
MAIN BUILDING					66,471.50
1	STRIP EXISTING ROOF COVERINGS AND CLEAR FROM SITE	295 M2	9.80	2,891.00	
2	REMOVE EXISTING TIMEBR DECK AND CLEAR FROM SITE	295 M2	15.00	4,425.00	
3	LAY NEW 18MM WPB PLY TO ENTIRE ROOF AREA	295 M2	45.80	13,511.00	
4	LAY BAILEY 17000+ WARM DECK ROOF SYSTEM TO ENTIRE ROOF AREA	295 M2	148.00	43,660.00	
4.1	VAPOUR CONTROL LAYER			-	
4.2	140MM PIR RIGID INSULATION			-	
4.3	BAILEY 17000+ 2LAYER BU FELT SYSTEM			-	
5	LAY BAILEY 17000+ FELT SYTEM TO ALL DRIP EDGE DETAILS	90 M	18.80	1,692.00	
6	LAY BAILEY 17000+ FELT SYSTEM TO ABUTMENT WALLS COMPLETE WITH TERMINATION BAR	9 M	32.50	292.50	
					79,160.80
HALL					79,160.80
1	STRIP EXISTING ROOF COVERINGS AND CLEAR FROM SITE	336 M2	9.80	3,292.80	
2	REMOVE EXISTING TIMEBR DECK AND CLEAR FROM SITE	336 M2	15.00	5,040.00	
3	LAY NEW 18MM WPB PLY TO ENTIRE ROOF AREA	336 M2	45.80	15,388.80	
4	LAY BAILEY 17000+ WARM DECK ROOF SYSTEM TO ENTIRE ROOF AREA	336 M2	148.00	49,728.00	
4.1	VAPOUR CONTROL LAYER			-	
4.2	140MM PIR RIGID INSULATION			-	
4.3	BAILEY 17000+ 2LAYER BU FELT SYSTEM			-	
5	LAY BAILEY 17000+ FELT SYSTEM TO ALL DRIP EDGE DETAILS	122 M	18.80	2,293.60	
6	LAY BAILEY 17000+ WARM DECK FELT SYSTEM TO BOX GUTTER	16 M	156.00	2,496.00	
7	LAY BAILEY 17000+ FELT SYSTEM TO RIDGE DETAILS	32 M	28.80	921.60	
PRELIM'S					15,055.00
1	WASTE AWAY	5 NO	365.00	1,825.00	
2	SITE SETUP & DISMANTLE	ITEM		780.00	
3	SCAFFOLD AND HANDRAILS	ITEM		12,450.00	

ATSPACE
DELIVERING BEYOND COMPLIANCE

Covering Letter for Milton Mount Hall

Upon completing a site assessment for Milton Mount Hall,, the following faults were found:

- Signs of water ingress in the 2 halls, on the ceilings and corner junctions of the envelope.
- Damp spots around numerous building junctions
- No floor insulation
- No flat roof insulation
- No evidence of wall insulation to areas of stretcher bond.
- Poor performing double glazed windows
- No mechanical extraction the WC's
- Low efficiency water heaters.

The above faults are all fixable however the onset costs are high, for instance, due to the water ingress around the building and damp spots, there could also be a lack of structural integrity to areas such as the flat roof, and corner junction of the building, once damp arises (especially in walls) it is extremely hard to remove and would in most situations of sever growth require invasive procedures.

In order to bring the dwelling up to standard regulations for the conservation of Fuel & Power (Part L2B) the following U-values would need to be achieved:

Wall (Internal/External Insulation): 0.30 W/m².K
Floor: 0.25 W/m².K
Flat Roof: 0.18 W/m².K
Glazing: 1.6 W/m².K

CJD ELECTRICAL SERVICES Ltd

ALL ELECTRICAL WORKS UNDERTAKEN

CJD Electrical Services Ltd,
6 Sun Lane,
Gravesend,
Kent
DA12 5HG
TEL: 01787 220 000
MOB: 07984 870 147

info@cjdlectrical.co.uk

CJD Electrical Services Ltd
Unit 6 Sun Lane
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KT
DA12 5HG
+44 787220000
info@cjdlectrical.co.uk
VAT Registration No: 253 5219 16
Company Registration No: 10452952

Estimate

ADDRESS
Milton Mount Hall

ESTIMATE NO. 1111
DATE 09/10/2021

ACTIVITY	QTY	VAT	AMOUNT
Services			
Survey isolate and Remove existing unsafe Electrical installation	1	20.0% S	1,200.00
Services			
PC Sum Allowance for Commercial Electrical fit out at Milton Hall, Metal Containment system for power and Lighting works across all rooms suitable for use of general public.	1	20.0% S	18,800.00
LED Energy efficient lighting throughout Electrical Heating circuits throughout RCBO Protection on all Circuits 3 Phase Main Distribution upgrade included			
(Please note UKPN required to carry out works of upgrading current supply this will be an additional Charge)			
Services			
Provisional Costs for external lighting works for Car parking area and pedestrian walkways	1	20.0% S	6,000.00
SUBTOTAL			26,000.00
VAT TOTAL			5,200.00
TOTAL			£31,200.00

Energy performance certificate (EPC)

Milton Mount Hall
Old Road East
Gravesend
DA12 1NQ

Energy rating
F

Valid until
2 November 2031
Certificate number: 5552-1963-6931-4172-4373

Property type
D1 Non-residential Institutions - Community/Day Centre

Total floor area
240 square metres

Rules on letting this property

You may not be able to let this property.

This property has an energy rating of F. The landlord cannot grant a tenancy to new or existing tenants, unless an exemption has been registered.

From 1 April 2023, landlords will not be allowed to continue letting a non-domestic property on an existing lease if that property has an energy rating of F or G.

Properties can be let if they have an energy rating from A+ to E. The recommendation report sets out changes you can make to improve the property's rating.

Energy efficiency rating for this property

This property's current energy rating is F.

Properties are given a rating from A+ (most efficient) to G (least efficient).

Properties are also given a score. The larger the number, the more carbon dioxide (CO2) your property is likely to emit.

Order 0

A+

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

148 pt

Net zero CO2

Milton Mount Hall
Old Road East
Gravesend
Kent
DA12 1NG

To whom it may concern,

I am Chris Parker the managing director of CJD Electrical Services Ltd. We are an NIC-EIC Approved Registered Company.

We have carried out a visual inspection of the electrical installation at the above site, Milton Mount Hall. I have concerns about the condition of the current Electrical installation which has resulted in me having to turn off the power supply.

The main incoming head (property of UK Power Network) is showing severe signs of overheating. As there is no other type of fuel coming into the site there are clear Strains on the Electrical Circuits being significantly overloaded due to electrical heating, power, lighting and hot water etc.

Please see pictures attached of the main head and the lubricant that has over-spilled. I have also noted the main water bonding/earthing is not in place therefore this has been deemed unsatisfactory. The installation itself is showing severe signs of age/wear and tear and I would not be happy with any members of the public entering the premises until urgent remedial work is completed. Regarding the main head I recommend UK Power Networks to attend site as I believe a bigger supply may be required.

Kind Regards

Chris Parker



REPORT ON MARKETING

Regarding:

Milton Mount Hall, Old Road East
Gravesend DA12 1NQ

October 2021



All your property needs

caxtons.com

Milton Mount Hall
Old Road East, Gravesend DA12 1NQ
Page 2
8 October 2021

- 1.6. I understand that Milton Mount Hall originally formed the church hall associated with the church then situated together on a larger site incorporating the site of the flats now on its north-western side - that is Wycliffe House, 20 Old Road East. The Church part of the site was sold in early 1985 - seemingly with the older building already demolished. The (then) relatively-recently constructed Milton Mount Hall was retained and became jurisdictionally attached to another United Reformed Church within the town.
- 1.7. The distance of almost a mile between church and hall inevitably means the latter could not serve the former all that well. Nevertheless, in addition to its own use, the local church made Milton Mount Hall available for hire to other groups and societies. Over time, the number of persons hiring decreased (for reasons discussed later) until in the last stages years, hirings became limited to a dance class and, finally, a nursery school which vacated in mid-2020. Further into the site is a timber building which, I understand, has not been used at all in recent years.
- 1.8. In the event, the decision to close premises is not taken lightly. At Old Road East, there was a period from at least 2018 of general consideration of the options. Nevertheless due, I understand, to an appreciation that the property required significant capital expenditure for refurbishment or even replacement in order to make it suitable for continued hiring and the limited use enjoyed by the Church and others generally, a decision was by made by the local congregation in 2020 to close Milton Mount Hall.
- 1.9. In my experience, the income received from hiring etc of church halls is modest and largely or wholly consumed by the running costs such as utility charges and cleaning etc. This may allow short or even medium-term occupation but there are rarely in sufficient reserves to meet more cyclical maintenance or refurbishment costs.
- 1.10. The pandemic took effect in March 2020 and the income from the nursery school was suspended for a period of six months. In the event, the regular use of the property would largely have ceased around then; The local decisions mean that the Synod no longer has a use or requirement for the property and the decision was made to seek an alternative occupier.
- 1.11. Caxtons is a firm of Chartered Surveyors and one of the larger regional practices in the south east. Advising on and arranging sales of places of worship and associated halls is a comparatively specialised area. For a number of years Caxtons has been instructed by the Synod in such matters - and in these matters all cases are my responsibility. Together with work from other denominations, I have arranged sales or lettings of around thirty churches in the last decade or so - with other instructions to advise or value etc. I was therefore well-placed to accept the instruction.

2. The property

- 2.1. The property is adequately described in our marketing particulars at Appendix 1. It comprises a purpose-built hall dating mainly from the 1960s. In addition to the principal building, there was a further timber framed and clad hall to the rear which had been unused and neglected.
- 2.2. At 0.20 hectares, the site is comparatively large and is regular in plan. There is no provision for car parking.

1 Castle Street, Canterbury
Kent CT1 2QF
Tel: 01227 788088
Email: ibingham@caxtons.comOur ref:
Your ref:Mr G Wakeman
Wakeman and Stearns Ltd
Tudor House
Wrotham Road
Meopham
Kent DA13 0AQ

8 October 2021

Dear Sir

Milton Mount Hall, Old Road East, Gravesend DA12 1NQ

As requested, we write to set out the details of the marketing campaign and its outcome relating to the above-mentioned property.

1. Background

- Following inspection, discussion and research, Caxtons was instructed on 17 February 2021 by the freehold owner, The United Reformed Church (Southern Synod) Trust, to market the property to identify a new occupier.
- I first visited the property in August 2018 to provide some preliminary advice, my involvement largely starts from around the date of the instruction and pre-dating information has been gleaned during the more recent processes.
- The United Reformed Church is one of the larger church denominations in the UK. Although formed as recently as 1972 through a merger of Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales, it can trace its Protestant roots back 500 years. There are approximately 1,300 congregations.
- It is arranged as 13 Synods: the national Synods of Scotland and Wales plus eleven regional Synods across England. Each provides oversight of about 100 local churches and is led by a Synod Moderator. The Southern Synod has oversight of an area including Kent, Surrey, East & West Sussex and South London.
- Whilst spiritual guidance and support is provided by the General Assembly and area Synod, each congregation has a high degree of local autonomy. The Synod operates as custodian trustee for the local congregation in respect of the property. Any decision to close a church is commenced by the local congregation itself and only upon a congregational resolution does it become the duty of the Synod to deal with the resulting property issues. Therefore, the availability of the subject property was a function of the decision of the local congregation - it is not directed by any regional or district process to rationalise congregations or property.

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Tony Mann (RICS)

CAXTONS COMMERCIAL LIMITED
Registered Number: 3482796
Registered Office: James Place House, 4900 Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 9SD
Caxtons Commercial Limited is an appointed representative of
Mortgage Advice Bureau Limited which is authorised and
regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority
Registered by FICS

RICS **AIFA** **IPPS** **Propertymark** **The Property Ombudsman**

Milton Mount Hall
Old Road East, Gravesend DA12 1NQ
Page 3
8 October 2021

3. Charities Act 2011

- As a non-exempt Charity, the Synod is required to meet the requirements of the Charities Act when making a disposition (selling) of property. The principal provisions are at ss117-120. In essence Charity Trustees must be satisfied that the terms of a sale are in the best interest of the charity. In most cases, a Chartered Surveyor's report must be obtained meeting the requirements of The Charities (Qualified Surveyors' Reports) Regulations 1992. A copy of the regulations is at Appendix 2.
- In this connection, the Synod engages another firm (not Caxtons) to provide the report. In practice, it is not available to the trustees to make a property disposal other than in proper accordance with appropriate procedures and outcome recommended in the surveyor's report. Therefore, the advice and views of the surveyor are sought at all appropriate stages.

4. Marketing

- Marketing commenced on 8 April 2021.
- In the section headed *Planning* within our property particulars it was stated "We understand that the main building has most recently been used as a day nursery. Gravesend District Council is the local planning authority". Assuming the lawful use was as a day nursery within Class E of the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 it would have allowed continued use or a change to the retail sale of goods, sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises, the provision of financial and professional services, offices and light industrial without further, explicit planning permission.
Therefore the marketing campaign included:
 - Direct email of property particulars to Caxtons specialist database of community users including churches and nurseries
 - Direct email to the very specialised property agency firms operation in the community sector
 - Circulation of property particulars to all regional firms and agents with an interest in the Church, community hall, nursery and day care sectors
 - Colour display advertisement in the Kent Messenger local paper (Appendix 3)
 - Display advertising in the Estate Gazette, the long-standing leading publication for property matters in all sectors. (Appendix 3)
 - Listing on the RightMove website - the UK's largest property portal
 - Listing on Caxtons.com
 - Listing on Propertylink - a major on-line property advertising site.
 - Prominent Agency board erected on the premises

5. Marketing Response

- 5.1. A total of 18 proposals were received from 13 parties – some parties choosing to offer on alternative bases or revising earlier offers. All were for the freehold interest and apart from two offers, all interest related to residential development.
- 5.2. Of the two non-residential offers, one party did not (despite a specific request) disclose its intended use although there were some indications that use for light industrial purposes in the form of a dental laboratory was the aim.
- 5.3. The second non-residential offer was subject to planning permission for use as a place of worship. Having regard to the previous nursery use, the view of both the prospective purchaser and the seller was that the current, permitted use of the property was within Class E and therefore explicit planning permission was required for a change to a place of worship, which is within Class F1.
- 5.4. The Charities Act surveyor was consulted on the various offers. The seeking of planning permission would inevitably delay a sale – and even then, there were some concerns as to whether permission would be forthcoming. It was not possible to identify any particular provisions in the local plan governing the acceptability or otherwise of change of use to a place of worship. The property is not exceptionally well-served by public transport and it is difficult to see how, with the retention of the existing building, on-site car parking provision or loading/unloading facilities might be accommodated.
- 5.5. The offer for use as a place of worship was also subject to bank finance and valuation. The party had not undertaken a formal building survey nor, so far as we could ascertain, taken legal or valuation advice. There were concerns that the condition of the building and its services, when fully investigated, would cause the offer to be withdrawn. At Appendix 4 is a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate and its related Recommendations Report. The rating of F-150 is very poor and would not suffice to re-let the building. The Recommendations Report does not identify any practical solutions that would address the issue. Furthermore, the ground level of the building is significantly below street level and hence the building entrance is reached via a series of steps. This makes access difficult for a significant proportion of the community including small children in push-chairs. Again, it is difficult to see how this can be readily addressed whilst retaining the existing building and the comments of its valuer on these issues might deter some lenders. Taken together, there were doubts that the offer would be seen through to conclusion.

6. Continued Marketing

- 6.1. An alternative offer was therefore provisionally accepted. However, the property remained on the market (marked under offer) until formal completion of the sale at the end of September 2021. There were no further offers from the community sector during this period.

- 7.8. Whilst some (but not all) of the deficiencies could no doubt be addressed at a cost, taken together the total expense would not be justified bearing in mind that some of the more fundamental problems will remain.
- 7.9. These factors will have been identified by those that might otherwise have been interested in the property – hence the lack of offers from that sector. Anecdotally, we have recently marketed another church/hall where the property is far more suited to nursery etc use – and obtained significant interest from that division.

Yours faithfully


Ian Bingham BSc MRICS MCIArb

7. Suitability for continued use

- 7.1. You have requested our thoughts on the suitability of the property for continued use as a nursery (or similar purposes) and the probable underlying reasons for the lack of interest in this sector.
- 7.2. With the possible exception of dwellings, the requirements and specification for most property uses has changed over the years and few buildings constructed in the 1960s are entirely well-suited to contemporary purposes – and church halls are no exceptions.
- 7.3. As previously set out, Milton Mount Hall was constructed to support and complement an adjoining place of worship which is likely to have pre-dated it considerably. Older churches were designed with a firm focus on the principal, usually dominating, and worship space. Typically there was little else in the way of facilities and this deficiency would have become more significant in the post-war period. For example, it became more typical for children and young people to be taught in classes at the same time as adult worshippers rather than on a separate occasion – and therefore accommodation to which the children could adjourn during part of the service became necessary. Similarly, there may have been more emphasis on the social-side of church – either immediately following services or at other times and thus the need for less formal accommodation increased. No doubt Milton Mount Hall satisfied the need at the time – but as conceived, it was not expected to stand-alone. In particular access to and from the hall from the church was (it can reasonably be assumed) broadly level and convenient; it is much less so now its sits in isolation.
- 7.4. The building dates from the 1960s and is typical of the style and construction of that time. It has brick elevations beneath flat roofs and now looks rather unattractive; there are suggestions of its design being such to allow a new church to be constructed on an additional storey above – but certainly this has not occurred and the modern-day practicalities are uncertain. Its poor appearance is not helped by it being below street level and thus quite untypical of the surrounding scene.
- 7.5. Internally the accommodation is essentially one large hall with only an entrance lobby, kitchen and toilets in support. It is likely this hall was designed to accommodate the entire church congregation and, as a consequence, it is now inflexible. Modern day requirements for nursery and similar uses (such as churches and village halls) now look for a range of accommodation sizes capable of supporting various parties either in the form of age-segregated nursery or, for other uses, societies and groups.
- 7.6. Internally the accommodation is rather austere and reflects its era. Some improvements have been made such as suspended ceilings and replacement of windows, but essentially finishes are hard and practical. Various services are likely to require renewal.
- 7.7. Externally, the property appears to have been properly maintained until, perhaps, more recent times. However, the flat roofs will require regular renewal. We have referred to the significant limitations for vehicular servicing and pedestrian access.

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Milton Mount Hall, Old Road East, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1NQ

252.4 sq m (2,717 sq ft)
0.20 hectares (0.47 acres)

- ▶ Development potential
- ▶ Single storey building
- ▶ 1.3km (0.8 miles) to station
- ▶ Residential area

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Location

The property is located in a predominantly residential district with both flats and houses represented locally. The railway station and Gravesend town centre are approximately 1.3km (0.8 miles) to the north. There is a generous frontage to Old Road East (B261). The A2T dual carriageway lies approximately 2.4 km (1.5 miles) to the south.

Description

The site is broadly rectangular, falling away from Old Road East. A modern block of 3 & 4 storey flats lies to the northwest and an older detached dwelling to the south eastern side of the frontage. It is occupied by a single storey building set below road level and reached via steps. It has brick elevations beneath a flat roof and is understood to have been constructed in the 1960's. Window frames are mainly replacements in uPVC. The large main hall, which is divided into two rooms by a partition, has wood block flooring; the ceiling height is approximately 3.5m. There are kitchen and lavatory facilities. To the rear of the principal building is a further timber framed hall, which has been neglected in recent years.

Accommodation

The property comprises the following approximate net internal areas:-

Entrance	246 sq ft	22.9 sq m
Kitchen	130 sq ft	12.07 sq m
Small Hall	578 sq ft	53.7 sq m
Large Hall	1,476 sq ft	137.1 sq m
Ladies/Gents/Disabled WC		

The principal building has a gross internal area of approximately 252.4 sq m (2,717 sq ft). The timber framed building to the rear has a gross internal area of approximately 196.9 sq m (2,119 sq ft). The site area is approximately 0.20 hectares (0.47 acres). A site plan is attached showing the property by red verge.

Tenure

Offers in the region of £750,000 are invited for the freehold interest. Any offer on a subject to planning permission basis should incorporate a substantial, non-returnable payment.

Planning

We understand that the main building has most recently been used as a day nursery. Gravesend District Council is the local planning authority.

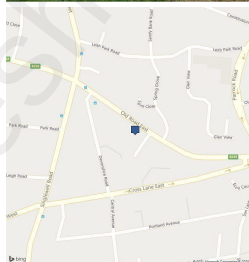
Legal Costs

Each party is to be responsible for their own legal costs.

EPC

Awaited

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Viewing
By appointment, please
contact:

Ian Bingham
01622 234886
ibingham@caxtons.com

James Squire
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jsquire@caxtons.com



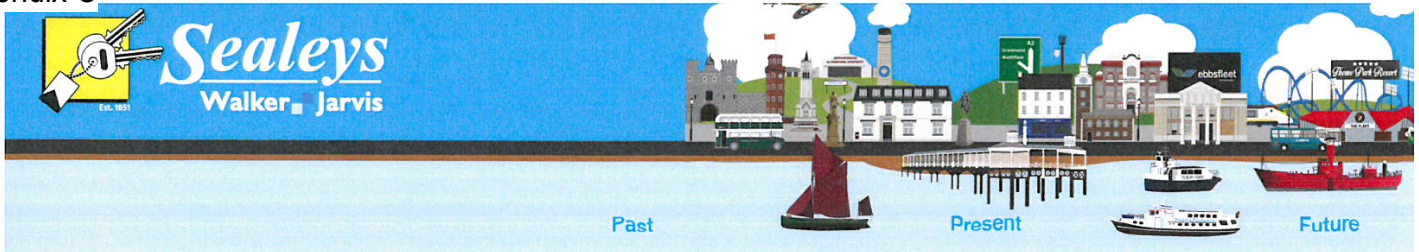
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29 November 2021

Mr G Wakeman
Wakeman & Steams Ltd
Tudor House
Wrotham Road
Meopham
DA13 0AQ

Dear Graham

Re: Milton Mount Hall, Old Road East, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1NQ

Thank you for our meeting on site at the above premises for the purposes of looking at options available for leasing the premises as a commercial premises on the open market. I have now had time to reflect and can report back to you as follows:

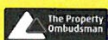
Sealeys Walker Jarvis are a volume commercial agent, dealing with around 60% of the commercial market locally. From this experience, I am looking at the likelihood of a commercial applicant wanting such a premises on a lease basis. The first likely occupiers that come to mind are churches, nurseries and gymnasiums. The issue with all of these 'likely' tenants is that they would require parking and / or a drop off point. My concern is that the property sits on Old Road East – a busy road dissecting Gravesend with double yellow lines on all roads locally, that has no such provisions. Dropping off or picking up anyone at this location, as we could well image when on site, would create a major health and safety risk and hazard, not just to road users on Old Road East but also to the neighbouring residential flats development at Wycliffe House.

Another consideration is whether this property is fit for purpose. Currently it certainly is not and looking at the contractors quotes you have obtained for works including but not limited to a complete upgrade of the electrics, renovation of the roof to include insulation, floor insulation etc you would be looking at a cost prohibitive £191,887 plus VAT. With a potential rent of around £20,000 per annum based on these improvements plus costs, your years payback would be 9.59 years based on these figures, without even considering the purchase price you paid. The building would also need to obtain an 'E' rating or above on a Commercial Energy Performance Certificate to be legally let out. This is why I am saying the building is beyond economical repair, aside from being a hazard at this location for any type of community use, church, nursery or gymnasium.

It is clear that there was one reason why The Church Synod sold the buildings and it is obvious that they too came to this conclusion. It is unusual for church organisations to sell any assets that are rent producing, but for the same reasons that I have to come to, this is why they sold.

Page 1 of 2

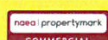
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I have also read Caxtons report from Ian Bingham, MRICS. In this he also comes to similar conclusions. Under 1.8 of the report, quoted is 'Property requires significant capital expenditure for refurbishment or even replacement in order to make it suitable for continued hiring'. Under 4.2.1 and onwards it details how Caxtons marketed the property to let including to targeted specialist churches, nurseries and day care sectors. Listings were on all major portals and local press. In addition, under 5.4, there is reference to it being 'difficult to see how, with the retention of the existing building, on site car parking provision might be accommodated'.

In conclusion, in my professional opinion the property is not currently fit for purpose and the costs to make it fit are prohibitive and would make no financial sense. The location of the property also means that, for the previous and likely future tenants uses, the lack of car parking amenity creates a serious issue with traffic to and fro the property given that the immediate surrounding area is that of residential property with no on-road parking and thoroughfare traffic. For this reason, I recommend alternative uses are sought that both make for financial sense and practical sense.

With regards



Michael Alan Sears MNAEA MARLA ANEA (Comm) HIDip NDea
Managing Director