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My Ref: 542

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**The Planning Department
Gravesham Borough Council
Civic Centre
Windmill Street
Gravesend
Kent DA12 1AU**

**Chalk Parish Hall, Pirrip Close, Chalk, Gravesend, Kent DA12 2ND:
The Parochial Church Council of St Mary the Virgin Church, Chalk**

P L A N N I N G S T A T E M E N T

This statement forms part of a planning submission for a variation of Condition 7 of planning approval reference 20040890, dated 02 December 2004.

Condition 7 reads: -

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) or any provision equivalent to that Order in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order, the roof space shall not at any time be used for any purposes other than storage.

The reason given for the imposition of that condition reads: -

In order to ensure that any intensification of use of the premises may be the subject of a planning application which the District Planning Authority would wish to determine on its merits.

The submitted drawings include my drawings numbers 542/01-/07 inclusive and 542/PL01-/PL05 inclusive.

Chalk Parish Hall was built about sixteen years ago in accordance with the planning approval. The Hall was built by the Church as a culmination of a 10 year project to provide much needed facilities both for the Church and also for the wider community. It was officially opened by HRH The Duke of Kent on 7 June 2007. It would have been categorised under *Planning Use Class D1: Non-residential institutions including clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court, non-residential education and training centres.*

Messrs Molyneux Architects drawing number 126M/P/01 formed part of the planning documentation for planning application reference 20040890 and it shows a ground floor plan, elevations and a section. No first floor plan appears to have been submitted to the Council. The approved ground floor plan shows no staircase leading to a first floor. The section does indicate some sort of first floor arrangement, but it is neither labelled nor detailed enough to show its extent.

Chalk Parish Hall has a number of spaces available for community use including: -

- Perkins Large Hall (160m² capable of accommodating 150 people standing, 120 people seated and between 90-100 people seated for dining).
- Perkins North Hall (99m² capable of accommodating 100 people standing, 70 people seated and 50 people seated for dining).
- Darnley-Joyes Hall with its own self-contained kitchenette (56m² capable of accommodating 60 people standing, 40 people seated and 36 people seated for dining).
- Holloway Hall (44m² capable of accommodating 60 people standing, 40 people seated and 36 people seated for dining).

Planning Use Class D was revoked from 1 September 2020. I consider that Chalk Parish Hall would now be categorised within *Planning Use Class F2(b): Halls or meeting places for the principal use of the local community*. It is used for a large number of community activities within the village of Chalk.

The Parish Hall has a car park located alongside it and which fronts Lower Higham Road and Osney Way. The car park is leased from the Council.

The Parish Hall was built as a part single / part two-storey structure under a mono-pitch roof with the highest part of the building fronting Lower Higham Road having two floors. Both the Perkins and the Darnley Joy nes Halls extend up to the roof structure.

The Parish Hall as built has an upper floor which is currently used for storage accommodation and which has windows facing onto Lower Higham Road. The windows were shown on the approved elevations. There are two separate storage areas on the upper floor which are independently served by separate staircases. The first of these areas has a staircase located off the entrance foyer. This space is described as a storeroom on the approved plan. The second of these areas is used as a storage space for the play group which uses one of the halls within the complex. It has a very narrow staircase which is located in another of the storerooms shown on the approved plan. This second space is set approximately 400mm lower than the first. There is a boarded up opening between the two spaces.

The Vicar of St Mary's Church, The Reverend Nigel Bourne, is also the Area Dean of Gravesend.

There is a need to provide a suitable office within the Parish Hall for the Hall manager and a curate and this space does not presently exist within the Parish Hall. It would also be helpful to create a dedicated space to be available to hold meetings of the Parochial Church Council and a small number of church sub-committees, including from the Gravesend Deanery Synod. All these meetings involve approximately twenty people or fewer and occur about twelve times in any one year. Other shorter, sometimes impromptu, meetings take place during

other activities in the hall, e.g., the weekly village coffee morning, but it would be more appropriate if these could be conducted in a quieter and more private space.

The proposed office and meeting room would be located within the first of the current upper floor storage spaces.

The meeting room would be used for meetings that already take place on the premises but they currently take place downstairs in one of the existing halls. A dedicated meeting room would allow for tables and chairs to be left out permanently and the associated equipment including flip charts and a/v screens/projectors for presentations to the Church Council when they can be afforded, can be securely accommodated without the fear of being vandalised.

The proposed office and meeting room would be used solely in connection with Parish and Deanery activities, which include the administration of the Parish Hall. A wheelchair-accessible lift would also be installed between the existing ground floor foyer and the new first floor accommodation.

The lift, in addition to its obvious benefits for any member of the church committees with mobility issues, is envisaged as a help in moving items that are used at various fundraising, community and performance events, to and from storage on the upper floor.

The proposed meeting room and office would clearly not result in an intensification of the use of the Parish Hall. The use of part of the first floor space for these purposes would be within the spirit of the planning approval reference 20040890.

Some storage space would remain available to use and where items in store can no longer be accommodated, they will be redeployed elsewhere within the Parish. The existing boarded up opening between the upper floor two storage spaces will be opened up and a short flight of steps will be formed between them to take up the difference between levels. This will improve safe access to the second of the two storage spaces at first floor level. It will also enable the second storage space to connect with the main staircase and proposed lift.

The only alterations that will take place are internal and the existing external appearance will remain unchanged.

The reason given for the imposition of condition 7 was clearly in order to regulate any possible intensification of the use of the premises. I stress again that there will be no intensification of the use of the premises caused by the proposed meeting room and office.

I did contact the Council about this matter on 14 July 2023 and I asked for advice about whether or not the current planning use would change as a result of the proposal. I was told that such advice would not be given without a formal pre-application submission or an application for a Lawful Development Certificate being made for both of which fees would be payable. The cost of a pre-application advice would be £560.00 whilst a Lawful Development Certificate application would cost £231.00.

A Lawful Development Certificate submission was made to the Council on 31 July 2023. The case officer made a site visit on 20 September 2023, 6 days before the due determination date. I was advised by the case officer on the due determination date that the submission would be refused a Lawful Development Certificate because of condition 7 of planning approval reference 20040890. The lift installation would not require planning approval but the use of part of the upper floor by a meeting room and an office would constitute a breach of that condition. I was advised by the case officer to apply to the Council either for a variation of that planning condition or for full planning approval, dependent on how much the application fee would be. It would be more sensible to apply to the Council for a variation of planning condition 7 rather than to have to apply for another full planning application where no change of use will apply and where there will be no intensification of the use of the premises. The Lawful Development Certificate submission was withdrawn with the case officer's agreement, on 27 September 2023 and I advised the case officer that the proposals would be resubmitted as an application for a variation of the condition relating to the storage use at first floor level becoming in part a meeting room and an office shortly.

May I suggest that the Council approves a rewording of condition 7 of planning approval reference 20040890 on the following lines: -

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) or any provision equivalent to that Order in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order, the roof space shall not at any time be used for any purposes other than storage, and/or as a church committee room and/or as an office for the Parish Hall manager and for a curate.

I trust that the documents provided will enable you to fully assess my clients' application. If any further clarification is required, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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