

Planning, Design and Access Statement submitted by the City Praise Centre in support of an application for a permanent change of use of the The Maltings, Lower Higham Road, Gravesend, DA12 2LY from offices (formerly class B1), showroom (formerly class A1) and workshop (formerly class B1) to a mixed use of education (class F1a) and a place of religious worship (class F1f).

21st October 2022

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Background to the application

City Praise Centre (CPC), is a Christian church and independent charity (registered in England and Wales No. 1160677) that was first established in 1959. Since inception, the church has always been based in Lower Higham Road, Gravesend, with a focus on the local area.

In 2017 we sought permission to use The Maltings, situated next door to the existing church, to cope with the growth in attendance, and to support our activities in the local community. This site consists of an early 1800's building and a modern warehouse, which is ideal for our needs.

Planning permission was sought from Gravesend Council (Application: 20180072) for change of use between April – December 2017. Temporary permission was granted in December 2017 for a 4-year period. The main reservation for not granting permanent permission was that there may not be sufficient car parking which could, potentially, adversely affect residential amenity due to indiscriminate parking.

On 12th January 2018, a meeting was held at the council offices between Michael Coveney (CPC), Tom Griffiths (CPC), Kevin Burbridge (Executive responsible for Planning), Sian Morley (Senior Planning Officer), and local MP Adam Holloway. At that meeting, Kevin Burbridge stressed that providing that there are no issues in terms of traffic, parking, and noise, then the council would not hold back on granting permanent permission in 4 years' time. He also said that the above factors would be the only ones that would be considered at that time.

However, despite this assurance, our application in early 2021 for permanent permission was not granted. The reason given was that due to the pandemic, it was not possible to gauge the volume of traffic that would normally be expected on the site, particularly on a Sunday. Consequently, temporary permission was granted for a further 2 years, ending in July 2023.

This application

The following schedule of approved plans covering the site were included in the original submission, and have not changed:

- Dwg No: 17 194 01 - Existing plan and elevation (Ground Floor Plan, East Elevation and Location Plan);
- Dwg No: 17 194 02 - Existing plan and elevations (First Floor Plan and South Elevation);
- Dwg No: 17 194 03A - Proposed plan and elevation;
- Dwg No: 17 194 04A - Proposed plan and elevation;
- Dwg No: 17 194 05 - Proposed Parking Plan (The Maltings);
- Dwg No: 17 194 06 - Proposed Church Parking Plan;
- Dwg No: 17 194 06 - Existing Church Parking Plan;

Our submission is that we have proved over many years that we do not present any kind of threat to the amenity of residents in the area. Our own parking facilities are more than adequate for weekly activities while our rolling 5-year agreement with the North Kent College (situated next door to the Maltings) to use their car park of 200+ spaces on a Sunday, means that visitors never have to park on the road.

Description of the church and its activities

CPC is a multicultural church of around 325 members, with an ethnic breakdown of 40% White, 50% Black and 10% Asian. Not everyone attends the church at any one time. The highest attendance is on a Sunday morning and other major Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas. The church also broadcasts its services on the Internet, for those who are not able to attend.

The church's focus and outreach is to the local communities of Westcourt, Dickens and Damigos Road. This is reflected in the activities carried out on the site which have been well received by those local communities which include:

- **City Youth** – that takes the form of an after-school club where ages 12-21 can eat, play games, learn to play musical instruments, and are taught various life skills
- **Young Adults** – which is aimed at 21-30's to bring them together.
- **Parent and Toddlers** – that takes place mid-week and takes the form of a play area and information centre on all aspects of parenting
- **Make Lunch** – where lunch is made and distributed to local families in the area. This initially came as a response to the pandemic lockdowns but will continue for the foreseeable future.
- **Pastoral care** in the area of marriage counselling, domestic abuse, personal finances, mental health well-being and bereavement.
- **With love** – that provides practical help in the form of furniture, white goods and in paying for utilities. As with all our activities, this help is for any member of the local community, irrespective of their belief or ethnicity.
- **Prayer centre** where anyone can come in and pray during the week

Through Churches Together in Gravesham, they work closely with the other churches in the area to support:

- **Street Pastors** – this is an international movement to ensure party goers in the town centre on Friday and Saturday nights get home safely
- **School Pastors** – that work with local schools to provide befriending to the children attending
- **School assemblies and classes** – which serve the local schools and whose activities form part of the national curriculum
- **Sanctuary homeless shelter** – that works closely with Gravesham council to provide overnight accommodation to rough sleepers. Although this is now an independent charity, the church is still a major supplier of volunteers and management oversight.
- **Foodbank** – the national charity that offers food to those who need it. The church provides volunteers and issues food vouchers from its offices during the week

The building is used by a number of local groups, which for some are provided free of charge.

- **We are Beams** - a charity set up by local parents for families with disabled children up to the age of 25
- **NHS** Vaccinations for secondary schools
- **Bee Bright** that provides extra primary school tuition
- **Ellenor Hospice** – another local charity that makes use of the building for staff training
- **Slimming World** who run well attended sessions on a Saturday morning
- **Girl Guide Association** where the building is used to host a local troop
- **U3A** – a senior educational charity where members can learn about new skills
- **NHS Blood Donations** – the church is used regularly to collect blood from donors

Outside of the Gravesham area the church also supports an orphanage and leper colony in India. This support takes the form of regular monthly donations and where groups of volunteers visit and help out in person.

Most of these activities are only possible because of the use of the Maltings building.

The church employs 7 staff with a further 10+ who are regular volunteers.

Survey of parking availability and car park usage

We monitor car usage weekly and have prepared a travel survey attached to this application. In it we detail the availability of car parking in the area and the steps we have taken to reduce car usage.