
2024/0632

Mr Tony Brown

New ramped access, pathways and steps with handrails from the car park to church

Christ Church, Doncaster Road, Ardsley, Barnsley, S71 5EF

Site Location & Description

The application site is an existing church with associated grounds and pathways. Doncaster Road defines the northern boundary of the site, with residential properties to the south. The site is at a higher level than the adjacent road, with a stone wall retaining the northern part of the site and stone steps providing pedestrian access. Large trees are located across the site, albeit these are not protected. The application site also extends beyond the church site to include the existing access through the adjacent Air Scout site.

The church itself is unlisted but is understood to be built in 1841. The church has a cross/cruciform shaped footprint with gable roofs and built in sandstone. The church has a small bell tower / lantern above the western wall with round arches windows. Pathways wrap around the footprint of the church, though the paths are undulated due to the presence of tree roots.

There is a property to the south of the site which would have originally been the associated vicarage, whilst other residential properties are located further to the south. A Working Men's Club and small scale shop are located on the opposite side of the Doncaster Road surrounded by other residential properties.



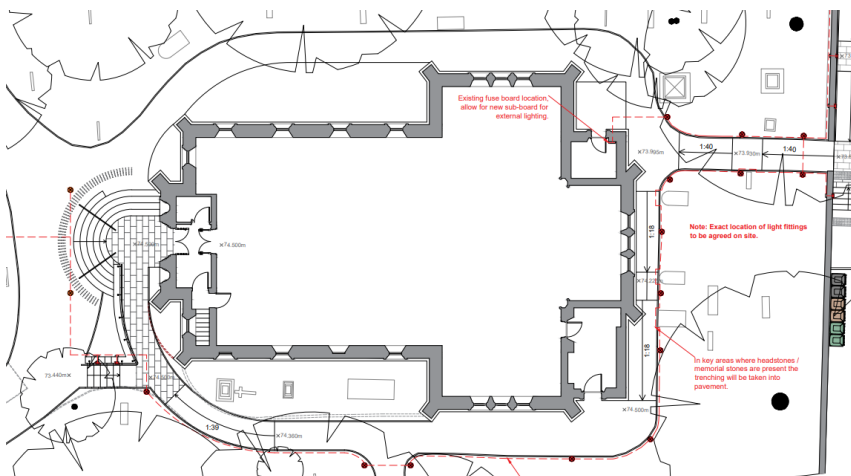
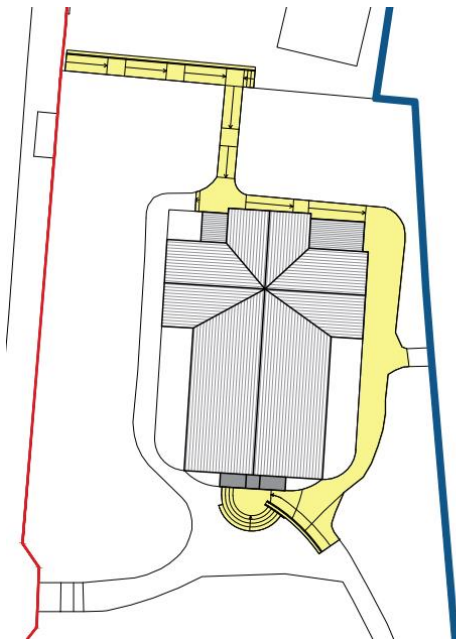
Site History

No relevant planning history.

Proposed Development

This application seeks full planning permission for alterations to the existing footpath and the installation of associated handrails to improve accessibility to the church building. The existing paths/steps to the south and east of the church will be regraded and lighting installed. The lighting will consist of a mixture timber bollard lighting; ground lighting and wall lights.

Additional information has been provided to address concerns raised by the Forestry Officer as well as updated lighting information.



Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning decisions to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Local Plan was adopted in January 2019 and is also now accompanied by seven masterplan frameworks which apply to the largest site allocations (housing, employment and mixed use sites).

In addition, the Council has adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans which provide supporting guidance and specific local policies and are a material consideration in the decision-making process.

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027 or earlier if circumstances, require it.

Site Allocation/Designation

The footprint of the church lies within Urban Fabric as defined in the Barnsley Local Plan, however the surrounding grounds is designated Green Space.

The site falls within the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area. The majority of the site is in a low-risk development area as per the Coal Authority maps, though the south-eastern corner is a high-risk area. The site is in Flood Zone 1 thus at low risk of flooding as per the Environment Agency maps.

National Planning Policy Framework – December 2024

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2024, replacing the previous versions. The NPPF is a material consideration when assessing planning applications. The following sections are relevant to this application proposal:

Section 11- Making Effective Use of Land

Section 12- Achieving Well-designed and Beautiful Places

Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Barnsley Local Plan 2019

The following Local Plan policies are relevant:

Policy GD1: General Development

Policy D1: High Quality Design and Place Making

Policy SD1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

Policy BIO1: Biodiversity & Geodiversity

Policy T4: New Development and Transport Safety

Policy LC1: Landscape Character

Policy POLL1: Pollution Control and Protection

Policy HE1: The Historic Environment

Policy HE3: Developments affecting Historic Buildings

Supplementary Planning Documents

The Council have adopted SPDs to provide further guidance about the implementation of specific planning policies in the Local Plan. The adopted SPDs should be treated as material considerations in decision-making and are afforded full weight. The following SPDs are relevant to this proposal:

Parking, November 2019

Walls & Fences, May 2019

Consultations

Biodiversity Officer – Meets the de-minimis exemption for BNG and has negligible impact upon ecological species/habitats. No conditions required.

Local Ward Cllrs– No response.

Conservation Officer- No objection to the development, considered to cause limited harm to the setting of the church. No conditions required.

Forestry Officer – Additional information provided during the course of the application to address initial concerns regarding the impact upon existing trees. Based on the additional information there is no objection subject to a condition relating to the arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan being complied with.

Highways DC- No objection, the development will provide an improvement to the current arrangement. Informative attached.

SYMAS – No objection, no conditions required.

Mining Remediation Authority – No objection, no conditions required.

Representations

This application has been advertised in accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order 2015 as follows:

- Site Notice displayed (public interest), consultation expiry: 17/9/2024
- Neighbour Notification letter, consultation expiry: 10/9/2024

0 representations have been received in response to the above publicity.

Assessment

Principle of Development

The site falls within urban fabric which has no specific land allocation. New buildings are considered acceptable where they do not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of surrounding residents, visual amenity or on highway safety and accord with the relevant policies quoted below.

The proposed development relates to regrading and relaying of an existing footpath along with the installation of associated handrails, steps and lighting at the existing church site. The development is relatively minor and is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle subject to the considerations below.

Impact Upon Character of Area and Heritage Considerations

NPPF Paragraph 135 relates to high quality design and states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive; sympathetic to local character; maintain a strong sense of place whilst optimising the potential of the site and create places which are safe and inclusive and promote well-being.

Local Plan Policy D1 states that development is expected to be of high-quality design and should respect and reinforce the distinctive, local character and features. Development should contribute to place making and make the best use of materials.

NPPF Paragraph 216 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Local Plan Policy HE1 states that developments which manage and conserve Barnsley's historic environment will be encouraged. This includes supporting proposals which conserve and enhance the significance and setting of the borough's heritage assets, paying particular attention to those elements which contribute most to the borough's distinctive character and sense of place.

Local Plan Policy HE3 states that proposals involving alterations to buildings of evident historic significance should seek to conserve and where appropriate enhance that building's significance. This includes respecting the historic precedents of scale, form, massing, architectural detail and the use of appropriate materials that contribute to the special interest of a building and capitalising on opportunities to better reveal the significance of a building where elements exist that detract from its special interest.

The application site is an established church use, which is not listed but has obvious historical significance, which positively contributes to the appearance of the area. The Conservation Officer considers that the church, together with the adjacent vicarage and scout buildings (formally a school) provide a strong heritage value and would be classed as a non-designated heritage asset.

The Conservation Officer acknowledges that the proposed works will ensure that access between the highway and the church entrance is DDA compliant, and includes installing ramps, lighting and handrails to improve accessibility. The existing stone steps will be replaced with semi-circular steps and a series of ramps will provide wheelchair access to the church lobby area.

Some of the works will be seen from the street, particularly the proposed handrails, however given the level differences and existing vegetation, the development will be somewhat screened. The proposal will positively impact the appearance of the church, mainly at the church entrance/lobby on the western elevation.

The pathways will be retained within the existing parameters and not encroach upon the church gardens/grounds. The use of semi-circle steps replicate the arched window design and suitable materials are proposed throughout. Together the Conservation Officer considers that the changes to improve the accessibility of the building are welcomed and therefore has no objection in terms of the impact upon the character of the area or the heritage asset.

Impact Upon Trees

Policy BIO1 states that development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features by protecting ancient and veteran trees.

Section 5.3 of the Trees and Hedgerow SPD (May 2019) states where trees are situated in close proximity to a proposed development a full tree survey is required. The survey should specify any works or pruning that is needed. Section 5.4 states that the submitted site plan must clearly indicate which trees are to be retained and which are to be removed.

Section 6.1 states that the tree survey should inform the layout and design of the development and should ensure that higher category trees are retained. Plans which show the retention of high value trees too close to buildings or roads will not be approved.

As mentioned above, the church grounds consist of several large trees, particularly along the site boundary and adjacent to the existing paths. Additional information was requested during the course of the application to assess the impact upon trees, particularly in regard to the regrading of the footpath/installation of lighting and cabling and the associated impact this would have upon rooting areas.

Additional information was received including a tree protection plan; tree constraints plan; tree survey and an arboricultural impact assessment and method statement. Additional lighting information was also provided which indicates the position of cabling and light installations.

In summary the Forestry Officer has reviewed the information submitted and has no objection to the proposal subject to strict accordance with the submitted documents.

Highways Considerations

NPPF Paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Local Plan Policy T4 states that new development will be expected to be designed and built to provide all transport users within and surrounding the development with safe, secure and convenient access and movement.

The Highways DC Officer has reviewed the application and has no objection. The development will have no impact upon existing parking arrangements.

Conclusion

The site has a long-established use as a church and whilst not listed, the site/church building does positively contribute to the appearance of the area and constitutes as a non-designated heritage asset. The proposed works relate to the church grounds only and no alterations to the church building are proposed.

The works are relatively minor and consist of the regrading and relaying of an existing footpath which runs along the rear and eastern side of the church building. The works will improve the access arrangements making the church more accessible and achieve the relevant DDA requirements. The Conservation Officer has no objection to the proposed works which also includes the installation of associated handrails and lighting.

The additional information demonstrates that the existing trees will not be impacted by the development, and the Forestry Officer has no objection in this regard.

Given the distance between the site and the closest residential properties, existing amenity will not be harmed.

Overall the development will protect the existing church use and ensure that the site remains accessible for all. The proposed development is acceptable subject to the conditions attached.

Recommendation

Approve with conditions