

REFERENCE NO - 14/504392/FULL			
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Removal of arched brick opening and arched hardwood doors. Construction of new opening to take rectangular aluminium glazed doors.			
ADDRESS Sittingbourne Methodist Church High Street Sittingbourne Kent ME10 4PB			
RECOMMENDATION Refuse			
SUMMARY OF REASON FOR REFUSAL The proposal would harm the conservation area.			
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE At the request of Councillor Truelove			
WARD St Michaels	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL	APPLICANT Mr A Brown AGENT Mr D Batson	
DECISION DUE DATE 26/2/15	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 09/12/14	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 18/11/14	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites):			
App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
SW/12/1207	Extension to front of Church to provide larger entrance foyer with central porch. Construction of extension to enlarge existing front kitchen.	Approved.	22/11/12.

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

1.01 The site is located to the rear of Sittingbourne High Street and is accessed via a long landscaped path leading from the High Street which affords pleasant views of the building beyond. The site is within the built up area boundary.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.01 The proposal entails the removal of the arched brick opening and arched hardwood doors and the construction of a new opening to take rectangular aluminium glazed doors.

3.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

3.01 The application site is located within the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area. (-statutory duty to preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets under the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.01 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) in relation to sustainable development and conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states;

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.”

- 4.02 Policies E1, E15, E19 and E24 of the Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 and the relevant policies in the emerging Local Plan should also be considered material in the determination of the application.

5.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.01 None.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.01 Councillor Truelove called the application up to planning committee stating;

“The reasons given for refusal are the impact on a conservation area. Conservation is not an absolute standard and a lay person might take a different view. I would like the decision to go to the Planning Committee so that the applicant can put his case and so that members can give their view.”

7.0 APPRAISAL

- 7.01 The Council’s statutory duty in determining this application is to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Local and National policy attaches great weight to the conservation of heritage assets and there is a strong presumption against granting permission for development which does not preserve or enhance the conservation area.
- 7.02 The existing arched doors were designed to reflect the arched doors in the south of the 1951 rebuild (shown in the history of the church) in fact they may well be the doors from the original south doorway. They are a very pleasant termination to the view of the church from the High Street through the arched entrance feature. In this respect they contribute to the special character of the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area.
- 7.03 The loss of the existing doors and brick arch is not in itself an issue. As the architect points out the Council has granted permission for new doors and a well designed porch which would make its own contribution to the character of the conservation area.
- 7.04 However, the replacement of the existing doors and arch with pedestrian looking anodised aluminium doors and a flat head with no brick arch detail represents a

significant downgrading of the character and appearance of the building and of the conservation area. The materials and the design do not do justice to either the host building or the character of the conservation area where the quality of materials and architectural detailing is generally of a higher order.

- 7.05 I recommended to the applicant/agent that an acceptable alternative would be to install glazed doors (in timber frames) in the existing arched opening. This solution, or the one which has already been granted permission (with the porch) would appear to achieve the church's vision for transparency and "welcoming all" without downgrading the quality of the architecture or the contribution it makes to the conservation area. However, the applicant/agent confirmed they want the proposal determined in its current form. In these circumstances, I recommend refusal of the application.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.01 The proposal would cause harm to the conservation area and should therefore be refused permission.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION –REFUSE for the following reason:

- (1) The proposal, by virtue of its design and materials, would harm the character and appearance of the building and would fail to preserve or enhance the special character of the conservation area, contrary to policies E1, E15 and E19 of the Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 and paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

INFORMATIVES

The Council's approach to this application:

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. We work with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

Offering pre-application advice.

Where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome.

As appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

In this instance:

The applicant/agent was informed of design changes required to make the proposal acceptable but unfortunately they were not forthcoming. The application was therefore considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the Committee and promote the application.

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.

The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.