

App.No: 150824 (PPP)	Decision Due Date: 9 December 2015	Ward: Upperton
Officer: Leigh Palmer	Site visit date:	Type: Planning Permission
Site Notice(s) Expiry date:		
Neighbour Con Expiry: 11 October 2015		
Press Notice(s): 25 September 2015		
Over 8/13 week reason:		
Location: Upperton United Reformed Church, Upperton Road, Eastbourne		
Proposal: Demolition of existing church and construction of new church and community centre		
Applicant: Rev Paul Tabraham		
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission		

Executive Summary

Application relates to the demolition of the Upperton United Reform Church, Upperton Road to be replaced with a new church building providing accommodation for a consolidated congregation from four Eastbourne Churches.

The proposal gives rise to highway capacity and safety issues such that the application should be refused on highway grounds.

The proposed design, size, mass and scale of the proposed new building is such that it is considered to out of character with the predominant pattern of development in the locality and would also give rise to an overly-dominant development that would have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenity. The application should be refused on design and residential amenity grounds.

Relevant Planning Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving Sustainable Development Para 7, Para 9

Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development Para 14, Para 15

Core Planning Principles Para 17

Delivering Sustainable Development Para 19

Ensuring vitality of Town Centres Para 23

Promoting Sustainable Development Para 30, Para 32, Para 35, Para 36

Requiring Good Design Para 56, Para 57, Para 60, Para 61

Promoting Healthy Communities Para 69 Para 70, Para 73,

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment Para 111, Para 117
Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment Para 126, Para 131, Para 132, Para 134, Para 137
Decision Taking Para 186, Para 187

National Planning Practice Guidance

18a Conserving and enhancing the historic environment:- In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation”.

It adds, “Part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past”.

A thorough assessment of the impact on setting according to the significance of the assets needs to take into account and be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset”

26 Design:- ... Good quality design is an integral part of sustainable development. Good design should:

ensure that development can deliver a wide range of planning objectives

enhance the quality of buildings and spaces, by considering amongst other things form and function; efficiency and effectiveness and their impact on well being

address the need for different uses sympathetically...

Local heritage resources can help give shape to a development and integrate it into the wider area, reinforce and sustain local distinctiveness, reduce its impact on nature and contribute to a sense of place.

Views into and out of larger sites should also be carefully considered from the start of the design process...

Well-designed new or changing places should:

1. be functional;
 2. support mixed uses and tenures;
 3. include successful public spaces;
 4. be adaptable and resilient;
 5. have a distinctive character;
 6. be attractive
 7. encourage ease of movement...
- A well designed space has a distinctive character...
 - ...is attractive, and promotes ease of movements. Layout, form, scale, detailing and materials should all be considered..

- Good design can help town centres by ensuring a robust relationship between uses, facilities, activities and travel options. It can also help create attractive and comfortable places people choose to visit. Every element of the street scene contributes to the identity of the place, including for example lighting, railings, litter bins, paving, fountains and street furniture. These should be well designed and sensitively placed ...

Eastbourne Core Strategy Local Plan Policies 2013

B1: Spatial Development Strategy and Distribution
 B2: Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods
 C2: Upperton Neighbourhood Policy
 D1: Sustainable Development
 D2: Economy
 D3: Tourism and Culture
 D7: Community, Sport and Health
 D8: Sustainable Travel
 D9: Natural Environment
 D10: Historic Environment
 D10A: Design

Eastbourne Borough Plan Saved Policies 2007

NE3 Conserving Water Resources
 NE4: Sustainable Drainage Systems
 NE5 Minimisation of Construction Industry Waste
 NE6 Recycling Facilities
 NE14: Source Protection Zone
 NE18: Noise
 NE22: Wildlife Habitats
 NE28: Environmental Amenity
 UHT1: Design of New Development
 UHT2: Height of Buildings
 UHT4: Visual Amenity
 UHT5: Protecting Walls/Landscape Features
 UHT6 Tree Planting
 UHT7: Landscaping
 UHT10: Design of Public Areas
 UHT 13 External Lighting
 UHT14: Public Art
 UHT18: Protection of Buildings of Local Interest
 HO20: Residential Amenity
 TR2: Travel Demands
 TR6: Facilities for Cyclists
 TR7: Provision for Pedestrians
 TR11: Car Parking
 TR12: Car Parking for Those with Mobility Problems
 US3 Infrastructure Services and Foul and Surface water Disposal
 US4 Flood Protection and Surface Water Disposal

Site Description:

The site is located on the A2270, Upperton Road on the corner of Watts Lane in a predominately residential area. The A2270 is one of the main routes into and out of Eastbourne and carries, on average, just over 10,000 vehicles per day.

The stretch of road adjacent to the site is approximately 8m wide, widening to 13m to the east of the site. Footways are present on both side of the road and a Zebra crossing is located just to the west of the site. Given the width of the road outside the side and to the northwest, there are extensive sections of double yellow lines in place to ensure traffic can flow as freely as possible. Zig- Zag markings are also in place on the approaches to the crossing further reducing on street space.

Watts Lane itself runs to the west of the site and is a one way street in a southerly direction. There is only a footway on the western side of the road opposite the site. Double yellow lines are in place over large stretches of the road restricting parking to the east side. It also has a relatively steep gradient falling in a southerly direction which would put off some from walking or cycling along this route.

A number of properties in the area around the site in Upperton Road, Watts Lane, New Upperton Road, etc. do not have off street parking. Residents must therefore rely on on-street parking which is limited due to the parking restrictions in place. The relatively low level of parking available coupled with the demand means the spaces there are, are well used at all times.

There is a mixed range of plots sizes, property/building sizes and architectural styles of plots that face Upperton Road, however Watts Lane and surrounding residential properties are formed by Victorian/Edwardian and later suburban dwelling houses that are more intimate in scale design and appearance.

Relevant Planning History:

EB/1963/0221

ALTS TO CHURCH HALL, PORCH AT SIDE

Approved Conditional

1963-06-06

970593

Construction of a disabled access ramp.

Planning Permission

Approved unconditionally

13/03/1997

Proposed development:

BACKGROUND

This application proposes a new church building with community and ancillary support facilities to be located at the site currently occupied by the Upperton United Reform Church, Upperton Road.

This new church will be formed by the amalgamation of 4 existing church congregations within Eastbourne who have agreed to merge to form one new Emmanuel Church.

The four churches involved in the merger relate to

- Central Methodist Church
- St Andrews United Reform Church
- Upperton United Reform Church
- Greenfield Methodist Church

The applicant has informally scoped the development potential of these four sites and have submitted these scoping documents to accompany this application. The applicant accepts with the vacated sites that the planning process needs to be engaged with before the full development realisation can be achieved. Notwithstanding this note of caution a summation of the characteristics of each site and their development potential is reported below.

The current application proposes that the development of the other sites will and can only be realised if a new site for a consolidated church can be found.

The four churches involved in this scheme are:-

Central Methodist Church Pevensey Road, Eastbourne BN21 3HP (Town centre location GradeII Listed building decorated in Gothic revival style. Constructed in two parts: school and hall in 1907 and main church in 1908. Site area 0.11Ha (0.27 areas) with a plot coverage of +84%. No parking)

Central Methodist Church:- Potential scheme involves keeping current congregation space and converting the rear of the building using existing window openings to provide 10 flats all with a floor area greater than 50sqm

St Andrews United Reform Church, Blackwater Road Eastbourne BN21 4NG (off town centre location. Not listed Main church dates from 1878. No parking. Plot coverage 0.1ha (0.25 acres) +88% plot coverage.

St Andrews United Reform Church:- Potential scheme involves Convert existing building to create 45 flats to be used for/as an extra care scheme

Greenfield Methodist Church, Greenfield Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1JJ (Not listed dating from 1898. Limited parking. Site area 0/073Ha (0.18 acres) +60% site coverage.

Greenfield Methodist Church:- Potential scheme had two development options and proposes; i) 5 X 4 bedroom town houses with integral garages and rear gardens or ii) retention of community hall facing Green Street and the conversion of the rear element of the scheme into 6 X 1 bend flats all greater than 50sqm in area and share of off-street communal parking for 8 spaces.

Upperton Road United Reform Church, Upperton Road Eastbourne BN21 1LQ, Not listed. Dates from 1881 limited parking 6 spaces. Site area 0.126 Ha (0.3 acres)

Current application proposal outlined above

APPLICATION PROPOSAL

The application presented to Members involves the demolition of all buildings at the site Upperton Reform Church, Upperton Road and the erection of a new church/community building with parking and roof-gardens.

GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor provides vehicle access to an Undercroft and surface parking area sufficient for 30 vehicles to park and main pedestrian entrance foyer and lift/stair core (within tower feature).

FIRST FLOOR

The first floor provides accommodation for the main congregation hall (190 seats), smaller hall and a range of meeting/office rooms, vestry and prayer room and welfare facilities.

SECOND FLOOR

The second floor provides accommodation for gallery seating (50 seats) over the main hall (first floor), three further meeting rooms and access to two roof gardens finished in artificial grass, and welfare facilities.

EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

Upperton Road:-The main frontage of the building facing Upperton Road has a horizontal emphasis and formed white render panel and curtain wall glazing and slate effect to the roof.

Tower:-A tower is proposed at the corner of the plot where the site abuts the junction of Upperton Road and Watts Lane. This tower is formed predominantly from facing brickwork with inset flint decorative panels.

Watts Lane:- The building form along the Watts Lane frontage is formed by flat roofed building carrying through the external finishes from the main tower.

Roof Plan:- A roof light is proposed over the main congregational hall and also over the tower structure. Two roof garden areas are proposed; one on the boundary with No 48 Upperton Road and the other to the rear of the building adjacent to Watts Lane and the rear gardens of Laleham Close.

RELEVANT HEIGHTS OF ELEMENTS OF THE SCHEME

- Side elevation adjacent to 48 Upperton Road 1.25m
- Roof height (middle of front elevation) 14.4m
- Tower (top of brickwork) 13.87m

- Tower (top of roof light) 18m
- Side wall (Middle up Watts Lane) 8m

Supporting Documents:

Travel Plan:- The application is accompanied with a travel plan that identifies that alternative modes of transport (buses) can be accessed to attend the site; this should reduce to some extent the reliance on the use of the private motor vehicle.

Congregation:- The combined congregations would on average result in 193 people attending based on the figures provided.

The applicant's agent has been monitoring the representations received from interested third parties on this applications and has submitted the following by way of clarification:-

1. Access from Watts Lane

This is primarily intended as a fire exit from the rear of the building and extends in the open air approximately 14m from the escape door to the junction with Watts Lane. If more space is required for a refuge in addition to this area which is 1.7m in width, this could be accommodated by combining with the door to the hall/meeting room which would be a convenient refuge space off the main road. The fire assembly point to the main building is intended to be in the SW corner of the site adjacent to the main entrance.

2. Roof Gardens

These are intended to provide secure children's areas for each of the 2 groups who will be using the facilities: the Montessori Play Group which presently uses the Upperton Site and the Jenny Wren Nursery at Greenfields: they are not intended for general use although would be available for children to use on Sundays. (The intended use was discussed and accepted by residents of Watts Lane who attended the presentation at the church on 18th July who pointed out that the Montessori Group already use a restricted outside space adjacent to Watts Lane without causing any difficulties. However, the resident of No.5 Laleham Close would not be convinced that children and adults would be unable to look into her garden even though the levels clearly show that this would be impossible).

3. Church Functions

Church functions presently terminate at around 9.30pm and restrictions for normal activities to 10pm are quite usual for church use. Occasionally at Christian Celebrations e.g. Christmas or Easter there may be one-off activities which require extended hours of operation but the church is conscious of the need to avoid disturbance to its neighbours. Residents attending the coffee morning noted that because of the Methodist involvement in the scheme, alcohol will not be permitted on the premises.

4. Parking generally

At present the Upperton Church can and infrequently does accommodate over 300 people. The only parking available is the end to end bays at the front. All other parking has to take place on surrounding streets for both mid-week and Sunday

activities. A Green Travel Plan has already been submitted as part of the application which demonstrates the commitment of the church to reduce travel by private cars. This together with 30 spaces laid out in accordance with approved dimensions increased by a further 10 spaces which will be managed by the church on a first-in last-out basis, will significantly improve the present position. Any overspill on the surrounding streets will be reduced appropriately.

5. Community Provision

All four churches offer their accommodation for a variety of secular activities ranging from toddler groups, meetings for mutual support, community arts (choirs/dance/drama), in addition to usual church activities. The changing demographics of the Upperton area indicates that more facilities will be required covering the whole age range. The new facilities will be to a high standard, properly equipped with modern technology and the church has every reason to believe their continuing commitment to their community by offering good quality low priced facilities will be continued.

6. The Proposed Church Tower

The tower is the perfect location to accommodate a lift which has to be large enough to accommodate a casket with the appropriate overrun required and a suitably wide staircase which would otherwise have to be located in the foyer. A Tower is universally recognised to be a strong Christian symbol which has theological as well as spatial significance and will be a way of accentuating the importance of this corner site.

7. Design

The proposed building is unashamedly modern and distinctive in its appearance when viewed from the Upperton Road but uses brickwork with flint panels elsewhere in recognition of the existing materials which predominate in the area. Clearly this is not appreciated by some who have written letters of objection but which was appreciated by almost all who attended the presentation at the church on 18th July, the records of which are a part of our submission.

Consultations:

Internal:

Specialist Advisor (Economic Development) Scheme is likely to result in a number of job opportunities, a Local Labour Agreement via a S106 should deliver local job opportunities.

Specialist Advisor (Environmental Health):- No representations received.

Highways ESCC:- Object and recommend refusal for the following reasons:

Layout:

The site currently has 'in and out' driveways and would look to retain both accesses, although the eastern access would be widened to accommodate the majority of the traffic, with the western entrance maintained mainly for pedestrian access as well as for wedding and funeral cars.

The parking bays proposed have dimensions of 4.8m x 2.4m which is less than the 5m x 2.5m recommended in the ESCC guidance. It is also noted that the support columns are also within a number of the parking spaces reducing the width slightly which would make using the spaces more difficult.

The layout of the parking area in general provides adequate room for manoeuvring as a 6m of space is available behind the spaces in accordance with guidance. This guidance does suggest that 6m is required where spaces are 2.4m wide. In the case of those spaces that are reduced in width by the presence of supporting columns, manoeuvring would be more difficult and may require some back and fore manoeuvres to enter and exit the space. It is also considered that space 5 will be difficult to use.

These factors may well put off some drivers from using certain spaces.

A separate pedestrian entrance is shown from Watts Lane, which would also provide access to the cycle parking area as well as a means of escape route. As there is no footway on this side of Watts Lane anyone exiting the building will be emerging straight out into the carriageway, most likely from between parked cars/vans. This would make it difficult for pedestrians to see vehicles and for drivers to see pedestrians with the obvious risk of conflict. This situation would be worsened if large numbers of people were to use the route in an evacuation when they are likely to spill out onto the highway. It should also be noted that the access is only protected by a white line. Whilst these generally work well they are not legally enforceable and if someone was to park in the area they would block an emergency exit.

It is acknowledged that there is currently a pedestrian access from Watts Lane but the building door and the access through the boundary wall are off set. The level of use of the Church is also lower than it would be as a result of this proposal.

Parking:

The current church provides 6 spaces which would increase to 30. The East Sussex County Council parking guidance states that a church should provide 1 space per 5 seats. Based on a total of 240 seats this equates to 48 spaces being required. Although there is flexibility in the parking guidelines there needs to be justification provided to show that a reduced parking provision will not impact on the safety and operation of the highway network.

The combined congregations would on average result in 193 people attending based on the figures provided, but the proposal needs to be judged on the maximum capacity possible as the congregation could increase in the future.

Although 30 spaces are shown on the drawings it is noted that spaces 29 & 30 are shown as being reserved for wedding and funeral cars. It would also provide the only space within the site for a mini bus to park if one is used for drop off and pick up. There is also a concern as mentioned above that the layout will make some spaces more difficult to use which could put off some drivers from using them.

Also submitted is a plan to provide 10 extra spaces in the site if needed, operated by stewards which would run on a last in first out basis. Whilst in theory this could work it would complicate matters and limit the number of people who would use the car park. Anyone who needed to leave quickly or wanted to stay after the service would be put off using the car park if they could not be guaranteed to be able to leave when they needed or had to leave before they wanted as they were blocking the car park. These people would have to park on street to ensure they could leave when they wanted to.

As mentioned previously there is limited on street parking available in the vicinity of the site, due to the level of parking restrictions in place. The demand that already exists from local resident's means that the parking that is available is well used at all times and especially evenings and weekends. Any extra demand created is therefore unlikely to be able to be catered for on street close to the site. This may lead to people parking inappropriately which would result in additional congestion on the public highway causing further interference with the free flow and safety of traffic on the A2270, Upperton Road and surrounding roads.

Sustainability/Travel Plan:

A Travel Plan (TP) has been submitted as part of the application which is to be commended and can influence travel behaviour. The TP includes a number of possible proposals.

Bus stops are located relatively close to the site and are served by a number of routes which provided a regular service to and from the town centre, Polegate, Hailsham, Seaside (part), Bridgemere and Sovereign Harbour. On a Sunday however, as with most areas the level of service and routes covered is reduced. On Sundays the 51 is a half hourly service to and from the Town Centre & Polegate/Hailsham and an hourly service from Sovereign Harbour/Bridgemere.

This is still a reasonable level of service but those travelling from large parts of the town would need to change buses as a direct service is not available. This is likely to limit those who are willing to travel by bus especially in periods of bad weather.

It is suggested that a mini bus may be utilised to collect and drop off members of the congregation. Whilst this would be a positive step, no details have been provided on how this would operate. If it is to be within the site then turning would need to be provided. As the parking is under croft the only possible turning space that appears possible would involve spaces 29 & 30 reducing the on-site provision. Alternatively if drop off and pick up was on street then it would either interfere with the free flow of traffic on Upperton Road and restrict visibility for anyone exiting the site or using the zebra crossing or would involve pedestrians walking in the carriageway if from Watts Lane.

The Travel Plan also includes details of the home addresses of the congregation which shows that people will travel from a large area to attend the Church. The majority are beyond walking/cycling distance and large numbers will not be able to travel directly via bus without needing to change service or do not have a service available at all. The gradients of some of the surrounding streets will further

reduce the numbers willing to walk and cycle. The number of one way streets in the area will also potentially put off some from cycling as their journey length will be extended.

It is therefore considered that the potential for sustainable travel is limited reducing the impact that the Travel Plan could have. Car share and a mini bus could help but I have concerns about the operation of a mini bus as mentioned below.

Demolition/Construction:

Given the location, I have a concern as to how the current building can be demolished and the new one built without causing disruption to the highway network. The site can only be accessed from two sides and larger lorries will not be able to access the site as there is limited space within the site and certainly not enough to allow turning. Smaller vehicles would therefore need to be used but this would not always be possible for larger or bulky items, resulting in vehicles needing to park on street while they were loaded or unloaded. Ideally this would be from Watts Lane but as the road is one way it is only accessible from unclassified residential streets which are not suitable for HGV access. The building also extends up to the Watts Lane boundary which will further limit access. This would result in Upperton Road needing to be used which would interfere with the free flow of traffic. Given the proximity to Watts Lane and the zebra crossing parked vehicles would also reduce visibility potentially causing a safety issue.

Conclusion:

Although the proposal provides an increased level of parking on site I am concerned that the level proposed is insufficient to service the proposed use of the site, especially as some of the spaces may not be available and the layout may put off some from using the car park.

I do not consider that the location is particularly sustainable in transport terms and therefore car trips to and from the site are more likely as suitable alternatives are not possible for many.

As off street parking is limited around the site any extra demand cannot easily be accommodated and would lead to potentially inappropriate parking. Drop off facilities are also limited and within site would most likely result in vehicles stopping either in Upperton Road interfering with the free flow of traffic or in Watts Lane where there are no footways. Even if drop off could be provided within the site this would either remove parking bays in the site or blocking the access temporarily.

I recommend that this application is refused on the following grounds:

- The proposal does not provide for adequate parking facilities within the site which would result in additional congestion on the public highway causing further interference with the free flow and safety of traffic on the A2270,*

Upperton Road and surrounding roads and would therefore be contrary ESCC parking guidance.

- *The proposal would increase hazards on the A2270, Upperton Road by the additional slowing, stopping, turning and reversing traffic.*

Should the committee be minded to approve the application then a number of conditions are recommend

- *Parking to be provided before use commences.*
- *Cycle Parking*
- *Traffic management scheme*
- *Surface water drainage to mitigate discharge onto the highway*
- *Wheel washing*
Travel Plan

Specialist Advisor (Planning Policy)

Specialist Advisor (Conservation) In summary the mass, scale, design and use of materials as proposed for Emmanuel Church, is considered to harm the inherent character associated with the immediate and wider area. Recommend Refusal

Eastbourne Design Review Panel:- The applicant present their draft scheme the DRP at pre application stage and the comments/conclusions from the Panel have been reported below:-

- The overall impression was that the building looked confused and overcomplicated and did not have a coherent aesthetic across the building/site.
- Church buildings tend to be aspirational and inspirational in their external and internal arrangements and design. Panel members appreciated that the scheme was in its infancy however it was felt that further work/attention needs to be given to this.
- The building lacked the degree of presence that would be required for this high status community building.
- Double height and triple height spaces should be introduced.
- The tower was just a grouping of stacked rooms this was a missed opportunity.
- The entrance was not very welcoming and the sense of arrival was poor again for this high status building. Panel members questioned whether the reception space was large enough to accept 240 congregation.
- The building appeared bulky and did not have any finesse to the external appearance; further work is need to reconfigure the accommodation with the potential to increase the height/mass towards the centre of the building

- Palette of materials were confused and the design panel expected further exploration of this with further iterations.
- Car parking seemed insufficient to meet likely demand and they the parking spaces to the front of the building was unjustified and would potentially damaging to the design and appearance of the building/site.
- Increase the extent and quality of the public realm to the front of the site.
- Glassed roof and large glazing to auditorium is likely to cause heating issues give southerly orientation.
- Play space poorly located and could be resisted to another more central location and increased in area, with the possibility of decking over more of the carpark.
- Any further integration needs to have existing and proposed on the same drawings to clearly show differences.

External:

Environment Agency: No objections

County Archaeologist:- Full archaeological recording of the building would be required prior to demolition. Recommend that conditions are imposed to control the survey and reporting of the archaeological

East Sussex County SUDS Team:- Recommends that conditions be imposed relating to further sustainable drainage details at the site; these will cover speed of surface water disposal, capacity and practicalities of soak-aways and details of long term maintenance.

Eastbourne Society:- objects to the scheme for the following reasons:-

As Planning Advisor representing the Eastbourne Society, and in consultation with the Society's Architectural Advisor, I present my comments on the proposed Emanuel Church, Upperton Road .

The initial impression of the design is uncohesive as it combines a tower built in brick and flint alongside the remainder of the building in a post-modernist style.

The tower has surface flint panels that have obviously been used to break up the overall brick mass, considered a rather outdated style, though a more creative idea could have been employed, e.g. brickwork in relief or intaglio. Furthermore the tower as a whole presents a very domineering and bulky appearance on the corner of the site alongside a row of small artisan cottages opposite.

The main part of the church building is designed in complete contrast to the tower in a post-modernist design, with white painted rendering and a full length horizontal window, appearing more like an office building than a church. This gives the impression of a separate building altogether, surely defeating the object of a unified church building.

Whilst welcoming a church building in a modern design, it is recommended that the design be reconsidered, particularly bearing in mind its proximity to the immediate vicinity with a mix of early cottages and Victorian and Edwardian domestic architecture.

A reconsidered design is therefore recommended.

Neighbour Representations:

671 consultations letters have been sent out to neighbours and consultees. As a result of this consultation the Council have received the following:-

2 letters of support have been received commenting in the main on the following issues:-

- Happy to see new church built rather than an old one falling into further decay.

30 Letters of objection have been received commenting in the main on the following issues:-

Parking/Congestion

- Greater congestion
- Parking is difficult in the area
- New building is aggressive in its form and portrays a private appearance
- Very ugly building
- Dangerous location given road junction and also close to pedestrian crossing of Upperton Road
- Upperton Road narrows at this point making long range visibility an issue
- Increase in on street parking and general activity would/may impact upon the access for refuse and emergency vehicles.
- Watts Lane is a rat run and for a small road carries a lot of traffic.
- May lead to an increase in accidents

Appearance

- New building is an eyesore
- Proposed building creates a threatening and foreboding impression by its solid mass, height and box like nature, no elegance to the form that might elevate the spirit in an inviting way, this looks like a missed opportunity,
- Design of new building is neither in keeping or contemporary
- Occupancy of the new building unknown but likely to be less than those within the community that will be looking at it.
- Too large for the site
- Privacy screens top the roof garden make then building look more dominant
- More sympathetic materials should be used
- Wrong location for a project of this scale, building looks squashed in

Character of area

- Loss of an Eastbourne Landmark
- Proposed building is brutal and overbearing
- New building is high and dominating
- New development is out of character
- Overdevelopment of the site

- Individual sense of place with the grouping of church, Watts Lane and surrounding streets and also views over the Downs would be severely impacted and in some instances lost.

Noise and Disturbance

- Noise disturbance from use
- Noise disturbance from demolition and construction

Neighbourliness

- Overlooking from windows; these need to be frosted
- Loss of outlook
- Tower is particularly dominant
- Loss of light
- Loss of privacy from roof garden
- Loss of views from the Downs
- Brick wall side to the building facing Watts Lane is overly dominant and dwarf the Victorian properties in the area
- Noise disturbance from demolition and construction phases will affect the viability of holiday let business.
- Loss views.
- Overshadow and over dominant

Other Issues

- Potential damage to high boundary wall between site and neighbours
- Other locations are more preferable with more parking
- Already got community centres nearby, why do we need another one
- Why build a new church when the congregations are failing
- Cannot rely on parishioners arriving by public transport
- Parking permits will have to be rolled out to mitigate the parking stress
- Increase in activity will have an impact upon Carbon emissions.
- Current building used as location for family weddings as nice attractive building, unsure how many from the wider community will use this as a wedding venue given the poor appearance
- Proposed building would be better located within an industrial estate
- Pre application (by the applicant) consultation was poor
- Concerns over structural stability of the walls that form the boundaries of the site.
- Accept that more housing is needed in the town but would not welcome an extended church in this location
- Articles thrown from the roof gardens may cause damage/accidents

A petition signed by 21 residents from Watts Lane, Selwyn Rod and Laleham Road object to the scheme on the following grounds:-

- Off-street parking is insufficient
- Evening and weekend use would increase the impacts
- Existing traffic onto existing busy road in proximity to road junction and pedestrian crossing.
- Poor design
- Not reflective of the area
- Building looks more than a supermarket than a church

- Tower provides lift shaft for staircase can these be provided elsewhere within the scheme
- Noise and disturbance from use of roof garden
- No information about the fire assembly point, fire access door to the rear would have users disgorging direct into oncoming traffic in Watts Lane.
- Proposed signage is stark and out of character
- Horizontal emphasis of the new building being out of character with the area.
- Building materials should be more sympathetic
- Pre application public consultation by the applicant was very poor

Appraisal:

Principle of development:

The scheme proposes the redevelopment of a previously developed land within the urban fabric of Eastbourne and is considered to be in a sustainable location. In this regard the principle of redevelopment would accord with National and Local policies.

Similarly as the site is not allocated for any use within the Local Plan there is no objection in principle to a community building (existing or new) operating from the site.

Whilst the planning merits of the other sites have not been assessed by way of planning applications it is fair to say that the pressure for redevelopment of these sites (once vacated) would be likely to deliver residential units and to some extent community uses. In this regard it is considered that the potential for the delivery of windfall residential units would contribute to housing delivery/need within the town and will also help to assist the Governments growth agenda. It is recommended therefore that the development potential of the other sites as outlined within this submission is and should be a material consideration on the determination of this application. If to be supported then a legal agreement needs to be formulated linking and controlling the delivery of the church building and the other sites.

Impact of proposed development on amenity of adjoining occupiers and surrounding area:

In terms of residential amenity there are a number of issues to assess and these can be summarised as:-

1. Building impacts
2. Use Impacts
3. Parking Impacts

Building impacts:- It is considered that the proposed development given its size/scale and massing of the proposal is likely to have an overbearing, over dominant and unneighbourly relationship to the properties that lie adjacent and near to the plot.

Some of the nearby properties have short and long range views between, around and over the existing buildings on the site. These views appreciating that they are over third party land and thereby cannot always be relied upon are considered to add to the home-owners enjoyment of their dwellings. In this regard the loss of outlook is considered to be a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Given the height and of the tower element and the rear building and its setting close to the boundary of the plot it is likely to have an impact upon the available light to the front of these properties/gardens. As these properties are small Victorian/Edwardian cottages they do not have sufficient building plots to obtain relief from this impact and as such is likely to be more acutely felt than in other situations.

It is considered that the required privacy screen to the external play space would and does increase the bulk and appearance of the proposed building especially in relation to the sensitive residential boundaries of the site.

In conclusion it is concluded that the relationship as proposed by this scheme design and building is likely to significantly affect the amenities currently enjoyed by the occupiers of the nearby properties.

Use Impacts:- The amalgamation of the four congregations onto this plot along with the other wider community uses (including two church run crèche facilities) is likely to give rise to an increase in activity at and within the vicinity of the site and the surrounding area. The concerns over the increase in activity as an in-principle objection to the proposal (as raised by some respondents) has to be assessed against the current and lawful use could expand and intensify with the need for planning permission.

Notwithstanding this, the increase in traffic/parking has been outlined by officers from East Sussex County Council elsewhere in this report. In addition it is accepted that the site does currently operate a creche facility, however to double the attendance and to elevate their recreational space to second floor level is likely to accentuate the loss of residential amenity through/by from noise disturbance.

The applicant has outlined the potential closure times for the proposed establishment and whilst this is welcomed there are no controls over the wider community use, this lack of certainty of the potential use has raised a number of areas of concern/anxiety for some respondents. Officers acknowledge this area of concern however a refusal based on this element of the proposal could not be sustained. Officers are of the opinion that community buildings have to reach out to the wider community and as such the prospective uses will vary over time and the success of any community building is often reflective of the usage outside its core purpose.

Parking Impacts:- This matter has been addressed by East Sussex County Officer response elsewhere in this report.

Design issues:

In assessing the mass, scale, design and use of materials of the replacement church, against the identified character of Upperton Road its immediate and wider area, the following comments are made;

As expressed in para. 6.01 Scale within the Design & Access Statement "the footprint of the proposed new building, is less than the existing building and the overall height, apart from the new tower, is in proportion to the current roof line". However when balanced against the inherent mass, design and use of materials associated with the immediate

area. The accumulative harm associated with the massing, design and use of materials of the new church; detract from the appearance of Upperton Road, for the following reasons.

The massing [bulk] of the new church is considered incongruous, when balanced against the identified rhythm of the existing streetscene. A rhythm introduced through domestic gable-ends, a feature adopted by the existing building. Although not domestic in use, the associated mass of the church, is overcome through its orientation, resulting in a narrow gable-end façade addressing the street, reflective of the historic character associated with the residential area in which it is sited.

Turning to the design and use of materials, which express the functionality (activity) or importance of the principal internal spaces within the building (5.01 Design Philosophy within the Design & Access Statement).

The use of flint as a feature to the 'tower' which defines the corner of the building, addressing Upperton Road, is welcomed. As it recognises the use of flint as a local vernacular feature, which is a prominent boundary treatment, that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the immediate and wider area. It is considered though that the use of flint in this instance is purely decorative and an attempt to embed the building into the local street scene.

Whilst contemporary design is always welcomed, in this instance the extensive use of translucent glazing, solar roof, render and a screened wall, as contrasting vertical bands, to the front elevation. Unfortunately, accentuates the overall mass and orientation of the building, both key features considered out of character with the immediate and wider area.

In assessing the return elevation to Watts Lane, against the character and topography of the immediate area, the overall scale and mass is considered overbearing. With little or no relief to the proposed blank façade, that would sit close to the boundary edge of the lane. Whilst it is accepted the siting and mature vegetation associated with the cottages adjacent, provided some relief to their domestic scale. The narrow lane and natural incline, provides a characteristic stepped ridge line, an approach which contributes to the appearance of the area. A key characteristic which is not reflected in the design of the new church, resulting in a mass and scale which is visually overbearing and out of character with the immediate and wider area.

Further concerns regarding overbearing, are identified to the neighbouring property No 48 Upperton Road, a late Victorian semi-detached residential dwelling, reflective of the mass, scale, design and use of materials that contribute to the inherent character and appearance of the immediate and wider area.

Impact on character and setting of a listed building or conservation area:

Whilst the site does not fall within a Conservation Area, nor is it subject to national or local listing. Due to its siting, mass, scale and use of materials, Upperton United Reformed Church, is reflective of its period and considered; to make a positive contribution, to the character and appearance of Upperton Road and as such the gateway to Eastbourne from the North.

Namely, the gable ends as presented, strengthen the rhythm and harmony of the streetscene and compliment the late Victorian early Edwardian housing development in which it is sited, allowing for the interpretation of part of Eastbourne's urban development history. It is accepted the wider area of the site, has been subject to 1960's development, mostly in the form of flats, following what is assumed bomb damage, these additions whilst out of keeping with the inherent character and appearance of the area, are mostly set back from the streetscene, sited within large plots of land, softened by mature vegetation within their forecourts and as a result, do not impose themselves or interrupt, the historic rhythm associated with the late Victorian / Edwardian buildings.

Impacts on trees:

There are no trees affected by this proposal and there is considered to be no significant/material impacts upon the biodiversity of the site.

Impacts on highway network or access:

Please see East Sussex County Highways Response reported earlier in the report.

Sustainable development implications:

The application proposes to implement a 'building first' approach in order to ensure that the proposed building is highly thermally efficient and where possible through natural light and natural ventilation an internal climate should be created that would be pleasant/appropriate for all users. In addition the scheme proposes to look at other sustainable measures such like green roofs and low flow and energy efficient fixtures and fittings.

No evidence has been supplied to outline the inherent embedded energy used in the production of the materials used in the construction and external fabric of the building, notwithstanding this the scheme is considered to promote a sustainable development.

Human Rights Implications:

The impacts of the proposal have been assessed as part of the application process. Consultation with the community has been undertaken and the impact on local people is set out above. The human rights considerations have been taken into account fully in balancing the planning issues; and furthermore the proposals will not result in any breach of the Equalities Act 2010.

Recommendation:

REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION

1 The proposal does not provide for adequate parking facilities within the site which would result in additional congestion on the public highway causing further interference with the free flow and safety of traffic on the A2270, Upperton Road and surrounding roads and would therefore be contrary ESCC parking guidance

2 The proposal would increase hazards on the A2270, Upperton Road by the additional slowing, stopping, turning and reversing traffic. And would be contrary Saved policies TR1 (Location of Major Development), TR2 Travel Demands), TR11 (Car Parking) from The Eastbourne Borough Plan 2001 - 2011

3 The proposed building by reason of its design, scale, mass would be out of scale and character with the wider character of the area and would also be likely to result in an unneighbourly, over dominant development that would be likely to result in a material loss of residential amenity. The development would therefore be contrary to Policies B2 (Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods) D10A (Design) of the Core Strategy 2013; and Saved Policies UHT1 (Design of New Development) UHT4 (Visual Amenity), HO20 Residential Amenity of the Eastbourne Borough Plan 2001-2011.

Appeal:

Should the applicant appeal the decision the appropriate course of action to be followed, taking into account the criteria set by the Planning Inspectorate, is considered to be **written representations.**