

17/00222/FUL

The Minister

**Cllr David Clifft
Cllr Peter Lever**

ESSINGTON

**Essington Wood Methodist Church Bursnips Road Essington
Wolverhampton South Staffordshire WV11 2RE**

**Proposed single storey extensions to provide improved access in
and around the church and improved facilities within.**

1. SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY

1.1 Site Description

1.1.1 The site relates to an existing Methodist church located on the east side of Bursnips Road within the Parish of Essington. The site has a good sized car park with entrance and access points off the highway. The church itself sits hard on the highway with its original entrance and porch directly adjacent the footpath. The church was originally built in 1884 and is of typical design for a Methodists church of that period, but has not been sympathetically extended in the past.

1.2 Planning History

1978 Improvements to access road, approved (78/01277)
1986 Extensions, approved (86/00030)
1995 Church meeting room, approved (95/00328)

1.3 Pre-application Discussions

No discussions have taken place.

1.4 Agents submission

Supporting statement submitted.

2. APPLICATION DETAILS

2.1 Proposal

2.1.1 The application proposes an extension to the south side of what appears to be the original building as well as a smaller extension to the far larger extension. The former measures approximately 6m by 4m with a pitched roof with a height of 5.5m and will provide a better means of access for funeral parties; the latter being some 5m by 2.5m with a mono pitched roof over with a max ridge height of 4m.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Within the Green Belt

3.2 Core Strategy

Strategic Objective 1 - To protect and maintain the Green Belt and Open Countryside in order to sustain the distinctive character of South Staffordshire

Core Policy 1 - The Spatial Strategy for South Staffordshire

GB1 - Development in the Green Belt

Core Policy 2 - Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment

EQ4 - Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape

Core Policy 4 - Promoting High Quality Design

EQ11 - Wider Design Considerations

EQ12 - Landscaping

Core Policy 10: Sustainable Community facilities and services

Core Policy 11 - Sustainable Transport

EV12 - Parking Provision

3.3 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

1. Building a competitive economy

9. Green Belt

4. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

No Councillor comments (expired 04/04/2017)

Essington Parish comments (received 31/03/2017) No objections

No neighbour comments (expired 01/04/2017)

Site notice (expired 05/04/2017)

5. APPRAISAL

5.1 The application is to be heard at Planning Committee as the proposal is contrary to policy GB1.

5.2 Key Issues

- Principle of development
- Case for Very Special Circumstances
- Impact on Visual amenity of the Green Belt
- Impact on character of area
- Impact on neighbouring properties

5.3 Principle of development

5.3.1 The church is located within the Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Local Plan policy GB1 states that limited extensions or alterations of an existing building can be

acceptable where the extensions are not disproportionate to the size of the original building.

5.3.2 The Green Belt and Open Countryside SPD offers further guidance related to development in the Green Belt. It states that extensions to buildings in the Green Belt in the range of 20-40% of the original floor area will generally be permissible. The church has already had extensions amounting 188% therefore any further extensions now would be disproportionate, rendering the proposal as inappropriate development. Any such development is harmful to the Green Belt by definition, and cannot be approved unless in very special circumstances.

5.4 Case for very special circumstances

5.4.1 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure the substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.4.2 The church currently has a good attendance, taking in parishioners from churches that were closed in the surrounding villages (Essington and New Invention Methodist churches). There are a number of community groups also using the building including the local youth club, playgroup and table tennis group. The extensions are needed to provide a more feasible entrance for funeral parties as well as more up to date wellbeing facilities. The loss of such facilities would be detrimental to the community. Local Plan policy EV9 states that the Council will support the provision and retention of essential community facilities and services and their retention where these are the sole or last remaining facility. Overall, I consider there are material considerations that amount to very special circumstances sufficient to clearly overcome the potential harm to the Green Belt.

5.5 Impact on Visual amenity of the Green Belt

5.5.1 The extensions are both located on the south side of the building, located adjacent to the existing car park. They are low in height and designed to match the existing building. I do not consider there would be any visual harm to the amenity of the Green Belt.

5.6 Impact on character of area

5.6.1 Policy EQ11 requires that new development "respect local character and distinctiveness, including that of the surrounding development and landscape [...] by enhancing the positive attributes whilst mitigating the negative aspects", and that "[i]n terms of scale, volume [...] and materials, development should contribute positively to the street scene and surrounding buildings, whilst respecting the scale of spaces and buildings in the local area."

The development is in keeping with the design of the existing extensions and as such I consider the proposal satisfies the aims of EQ11.

5.7 Impact on neighbouring properties

5.7.1 Policy EQ9 states that new development "should take into account the amenity of any nearby residents, particularly with regard to privacy [...] and daylight." The extensions are located well away from the nearby residential dwelling and as such, there is no conflict with EQ9.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 To conclude, I have found the proposals for the extension to the outbuilding to be inappropriate. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

6.2 Local Plan policy EV9 states that the Council will support the provision and retention of essential community facilities and services and their retention where these are the sole or last remaining facility. Overall, I consider there are material considerations that amount to very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the aforementioned harm. I am therefore recommending the application be approved.

7. RECOMMENDATION APPROVE

Subject to the following condition(s):

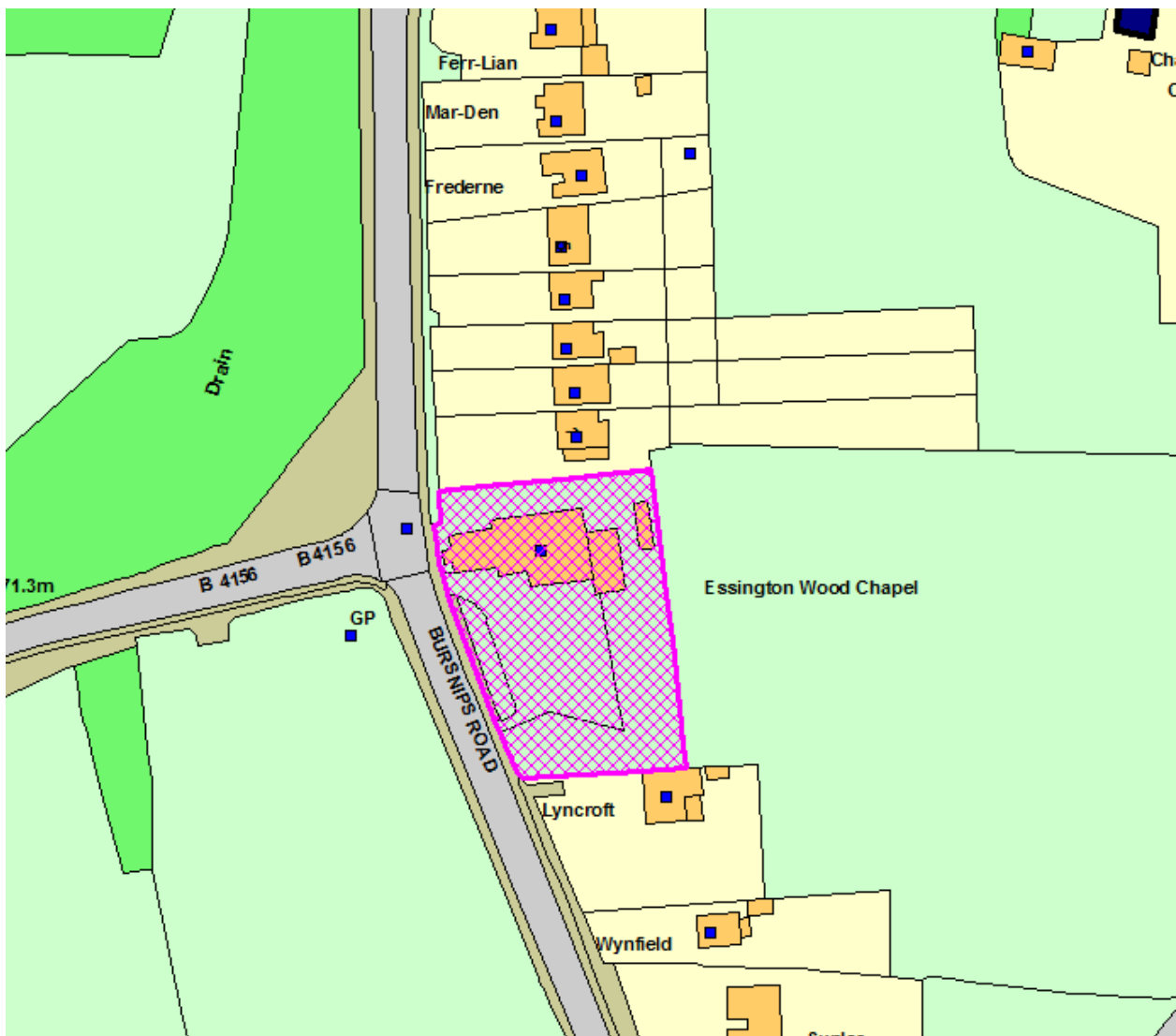
1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings: 17-014-01 11/2013 received 06/03/2017.
3. The materials to be used on the walls and roof of the extension shall match those of the existing building unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons

1. The reason for the imposition of these time limits is to comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. In order to define the permission and to avoid doubt.
3. To safeguard the amenity of the area in accordance with policy EQ11 of the adopted Core Strategy.

4. Proactive Statement

In dealing with the planning application the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.



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South Staffordshire WV11 2RE