Grace City Church Supporting Design and Access Statement

Introduction

This supporting Design and Access Statement is submitted on behalf of Grace City Church in support of a retrospective planning application for a change of use of the former St Thomas Parish Rooms from B1 Photographic Studio to D1 Place of Worship. The application is also for advertisement consent for the display of the notice on the side of the building on the Nivin Street elevation shown in the photograph below. The 3 square metre notice measures 244cm by 122cm and is mounted c. 215cm above ground level on the extension building wall on the Nivin Street elevation.



St Thomas Parish Rooms is a former Sunday school building and church hall located at Nivin Street in the Ardwick ward of Manchester located directly behind the St Thomas Church building on Ardwick Green which is a Grade 2 Listed Georgian Church.

The purpose of this statement is to provide additional information to assist the council in the determination of this planning application. The next section outlines the proposed change of use of St Thomas Parish Rooms from B1 Photographic Studio to D1 Place of Worship. The statement then describes the building and outlines the relevant planning history and then

there is a short section describing how the building and site will be used as a place of worship. The statement then considers the development plan policies relevant to the determination of this application. The penultimate section summarises the main planning issues and conclusions are drawn in the final section.

The Proposal

The proposal is for a change of use of St Thomas Parish Rooms from B1 Photographic Studio to D1 Place of Worship. The proposal does not involve any physical change to the elevations of St Thomas Parish Rooms other than the display of the notice on the side of the building on the Nivin Street elevation therefore it is considered unnecessary to submit existing and proposed elevations. Currently there is a hard surfaced area to the rear of the building (see picture below) which is used as car park for the St Thomas Centre and Grace City Church have permission to use this on Sundays therefore it is included within the redline boundary of the application.



The Building and Relevant Planning History



The building was formerly St Thomas Parish Rooms built in 1906, when St Thomas' Church was a parish church, and it was used as a Sunday School and Church Hall. The main Church building ceased to be used as a parish church in 1978.

In 1980 planning application F14178 was approved for the change of use of the Parish Rooms to storage and ancillary office accommodation. In 1984 planning application 022764 was approved for the change of use of the permitted store and office building into a photographic studio and laying out of a landscaped car park area. It is understood that the photographic studio use ceased in 2015.

The former Parish Rooms building is located on the corner of Nivin Street and Randerson Street in the Ardwick ward of Manchester. It is an attractive Edwardian building with glazed red and yellow brick and slate roof. The building features a main gable elevation and door onto the Nivin Street elevation and two side gables onto the Randerson Street elevation. The roofline is broken up by an attractive bell tower although the bell has been removed.

At some stage between the 1960s and 1980s a large side extension was added that fronts onto Cotter Street although we have been unable to find any planning history of this on the

Council's website. The extension is a gabled construction in glazed brick and has no side windows on any elevation with four velux type windows in the slate roof. There is a double door opening onto a small gravelled car park on the Nivin Street elevation that the Grace City Church has the exclusive use of.

Currently waste is collected in bins throughout the building and emptied into a commercial bin kept in a bin compound in the small car park accessed off Nivin Street as shown on the submitted car park layout plan. Grace City Church have entered into a contract with a commercial waste removal agent as detailed in the Waste Management Strategy section below.

Proposed Use



It is proposed that the extension building will be used as a worship area and occasional venue for day conferences as shown in the proposed layout drawing. Two services are held on Sundays at 9.00am and 10.30am and there is a prayer meeting on Sundays. There are 100 chairs in the worship area and this is the maximum number of people who will be using the building at any one time.

The older hall building (pictured above) is used for refreshments after the service and on Wednesdays coffee mornings are held in this room, which is adjacent to a small kitchen, that are for the benefit of local residents. Other rooms in the building are used for a church office[1], a crèche during church services and a youth group (also during church services). The whole building can be rented by community groups and local residents, however, no more than 60 people can attend, the church has a no alcohol rule and all functions have to be finished by 11pm.

Relevant Planning Policy

Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that *"Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise."* The development plan in Manchester is formed by the Local Plan Core Strategy and the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

NPPF (para 14) advises at the heart of this guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and para 7 indicates there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental The economic role includes ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation. The social role includes providing accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

Manchester Local Plan

Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted on the 11 July 2012 and is the key document in the Manchester Local Plan. It sets the out the long term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and will form the framework that planning applications will be assessed against.

The site lies within the Central Manchester Regeneration Area as defined by Core Strategy policy SP1 and within this area *'All development should have regard to the character, issues and strategy for... [the] regeneration area.'* The policy goes on to advise *'Development in all parts of the City should... Make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including...making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents...'*

[1] Grace City Church have two other buildings that they use for church services but this building is their main administrative centre. There is their original building in a small shop unit on Crossley Street in Gorton (Sunday congregation of around 35 people from the Gorton area) and the church also has a congregation that meets at Wythenshawe Community Forum (25 people from Wythenshawe area).

The explanatory text to policy SP1 advises (para 6.8):

> *"the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives requires that new development is shaped by certain overarching considerations. All development should contribute to the City's aim to create neighbourhoods where people choose to live and where a good mix of housing and local services and facilities provides for people of all ages and with differing needs. Good design can contribute to neighbourhoods of choice by making the most of the heritage and natural environment and helping enhance or create a recognisable and welcomed character to the area."*

Policy EC 2 of the Core Strategy entitled 'Existing Employment Space' is relevant to this application as it seeks to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites. The policy advises:

> *"Alternative uses will only be supported on sites allocated accordingly, or if it can be demonstrated that:*
>
> *The existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format;*
>
> *The existing use is incompatible with adjacent uses;*
>
> *The existing use is unsuitable for employment having had regard to the Manchester-Salford - Trafford SFRA; or*
>
> *On balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use."*

The explanatory text to the policy (para 8.12) advises that in certain areas the City has experienced pressure on existing employment space for other uses such as residential and recently the City has witnessed a considerable increase in office space and forecasts indicate there will continue to be growth in this type of employment space during the plan period. The Council wishes to ensure there is provision of a wide selection of business space, types, sizes, quality and cost. In appropriate situations the policy will allow redevelopment of sites to provide the opportunity for alternative uses of land as leaving land vacant is not an efficient use of land and should be avoided if an appropriate alternative use can be considered.

Para 8.13 goes on to advise there are circumstances where it will be appropriate to support alternative uses particularly where it would be unproductive to protect the land for employment uses, either because employment use is un-viable, particularly if the site has remained empty or vacant for a period of time despite marketing and the employment space no longer serves the needs of businesses due to its age and the conditions of the property; or, an alternative use would bring more benefits to the City, either because the employment

use is not the optimum use for the site or because any harm is outweighed by the benefits of the new use.

Central Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework

Core Strategy Policy EC8 refers to the Central Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework that was published by the Council in 2014 and its vision for this area that Ardwick ward is located in includes "*Flourishing communities, safe and well managed, with key agencies working together to ensure high quality service delivery...*"

This is to be achieved by:

"8. Improving the living conditions and environment of the neighbourhoods of Central Manchester;
9. Tailoring service delivery in Central Manchester to the specific needs of its residents;
10. Transforming the health fortunes of Central Manchester residents;
11. Reducing levels of crime and tackling perceived safety issues to enhance a feeling of security for residents."



Core Strategy Policy T1 entitled 'Sustainable Transport' aims to deliver a sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system to encourage modal shift away from car travel to public

transport, cycling and walking, to support the needs of residents and to prepare for carbon free modes of transport. In connection with this and amongst other measures the Council will support proposals that improve access to services. Policy T2 entitled 'Accessible areas of opportunity and need' advises the Council will manage the pattern of new development to ensure that it is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

Manchester Unitary Development Plan

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (the UDP) was adopted by the Council in 1995 as the statutory document which set out guidelines for all development in Manchester and provided a framework from which to base decisions about planning applications. Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted in 2012 and is the key Development Plan Document in the Local Plan. It replaces significant elements of the UDP as the document that sets out the long term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and forms the framework that planning applications will be assessed against.

The latest Proposals Map shows both Core Strategy and extant (saved) UDP policies. The site is not designated on the UDP Proposals Map other than being located within the defined inner area and within that the Central Manchester [sub] Area. Saved UDP policies relevant to the consideration of this application include:

DC15. Advertisements, Hoardings and Posters;
DC19. Listed Buildings; and,
DC26. Development and Noise.

These specific Citywide Development Control Policies are considered in turn below.

DC15. Advertisements, Hoardings and Posters

The application is also for advertisement consent for the display of the notice on the side of the building on the Nivin Street elevation. DC15.2 advises that:

> *"in assessing the interests of amenity and safety the Council will take account of the following criteria:*
>
> a. *developments of this kind should not harm the character or architectural features of a building, nor interfere with its proper use;*
> b. *they should be in scale with the locality and relate properly to the site on which they stand;*

c. *they should be unobtrusive and should not intrude into residential neighbourhoods and areas of high amenity value;*
d. *a proposal which would be injurious to public safety or adversely affect the flow of traffic, by reason of its position, size, or design will not be permitted."*

DC19. Listed Buildings

Policy DC19.1 advises in considering planning applications for development having an impact on buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the Council will have regard to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of such buildings and to protecting their general setting. In giving effect to this policy, the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity.



DC26. Development and Noise.

Policy DC26.1 advises the Council will use the development control process to reduce the impact of noise on people living and working in, or visiting, the City. The Council will consider the effect of new development proposals which are likely to be generators of noise. Policy DC26.3 advises developments likely to result in unacceptably high levels of noises will not

be permitted in residential areas. Policy DC26.4 adds where a new proposal might generate potentially unacceptable levels of noise, it will in either case require the applicant to provide an assessment of the likely impact and of the measures he proposes to deal satisfactorily with it. Such measures might include engineering solutions, improving sound insulation, layout solutions and administrative steps including limiting the operating times of the noise source, restricting activities allowed on the site or specifying an acceptable noise limit. Policy DC26.6 advises exceptions to the general policy will be considered on their merits and in the light of consultation with local residents and the practicability of appropriate conditions on any approval.

The Issues

The site is located with the defined 'inner area' and is mixed residential and commercial area. In the light of the relevant development plan issues it is considered that the main issues with regard to this planning application are:

1. Loss of an employment building;
2. Improving the living conditions and environment of the neighbourhoods of Central Manchester;
3. Access;
4. Residential Amenity;
5. Noise sensitive properties;
6. Waste management strategy;
7. Setting of an adjacent listed building; and,
8. Design of the Signage.

These issues are considered below.

1. Loss of an Employment Building

Alternative uses can be supported on this site as the existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format (policy EC1 para 8.13). The former Parish Rooms are not designed for commercial use and would be returning to their original D1 community use as part of the proposal. Whilst the area is a mixed residential / commercial area the commercial uses in the area are largely voluntary sector offices and the existing B1 light industrial use is inconsistent with the predominant residential use in the area. The proposal therefore brings an otherwise vacant building back into productive community use in compliance with policy EC1 (para 8.12).

On balance, the proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the previous B1 use such as making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents. The congregation is drawn from a wide section of the local community. Within Manchester and nationally faith groups make a major contribution to education services, welfare such as debt counselling, credit unions and food banks and the church does have links with local service providers in the Ardwick area.

2. Improving the Living Conditions and Environment of the Neighbourhoods of Central Manchester

As indicated above, within Manchester and nationally faith groups make a major contribution to education services, welfare such as debt counselling, credit unions and food banks.

3. Access

The former Parish Rooms have excellent access by all modes of transport. The A6 Ardwick Green South is part of a quality bus corridor to Hyde and Stockport. The following frequent buses make transport to Ardwick easy and affordable for church members: 192, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206 and 207. Because of this about 30-35 people come to church using public transport. The church also runs a min mini bus offering free transport to everyone coming to church. About 22 people come to church using the church mini bus therefore around half the combined Sunday congregations are travelling to services by sustainable modes of transport and in addition around 10% of members can walk from their homes in Ardwick ward.

In order to make it easier for church members and to best serve local communities a new church planting initiative was recently undertaken. The former shop unit in Gorton used by Grace City Church continues to be the place of worship serving Gorton and the surrounding areas and a new church plant was opened in Wythenshawe. This has reduced the numbers of people who come to worship in Ardwick. The origin of the two combined Ardwick congregations is as follows:

- Ardwick 10 people;
- Gorton area 15 people;
- Openshaw area 10 people;
- Stalybridge / Audenshaw / Ashton under Lyne 10 people;
- Moss side / Whalley Range / Hulme / Fallowfield 10 people;
- Moston / New Moston / Blackley 10 people;

- Bolton / Bury 10 people;
- Newton Heath / Clayton / Beswick / Miles Platting 10 people;
- Levenshulme / Longsight area 5 people;
- Stockport 5 people; and,
- Salford 5 people.

There are 22 parking spaces in the existing car park to the rear of the former Parish Rooms (shown on the submitted layout plan) that is available to the church at weekends and a small car park fronting onto Nivin Street with four parking spaces, including one disable space, that the church has exclusive use of throughout the week. The car parking is more than adequate to cater for those members who travel by private care. In any case the main use of the building is outside office hours when parking in the Ardwick Green North area can be difficult due to the number of offices in the vicinity but on street parking at weekends is not a problem.

The weekday activities on the site are very unlikely to generate significant traffic. If it is considered necessary for a church congregation drawn from the local community travelling mostly outside peak congestions hours, the appellant is prepared to be conditioned to provide a green travel plan in line with Core Strategy T1. However, the excellent access to the site / building described above means the proposal is compliant with all other aspects of T1 and T2 so this should not be necessary.

4. Residential Amenity

Given the distances to neighbouring residential areas and the mixed use nature of the area, it is considered that the proposed use would have no significant impact upon neighbouring uses through noise and disturbance. Similarly, given the proposed operational hours it is considered that the proposed use would have no significant impact upon the residential amenity of neighbouring houses that are at least 15m distant (corner of the flats facing onto Cotter Street) from the site and mostly much further.

The main Sunday service in the building is at 10.30am on a Sunday morning when amplified music is played and the congregation numbers around 70 people. There is an earlier service at 9.00am on Sunday morning when congregation numbers around 30 people. The services take place in the extension to the former Parish Hall that has no windows and is reasonably well insulated. There is seating for maximum of one hundred people in the extension.

A bible study is held on Wednesday (7pm to 8.15pm) and Friday (7pm to 9pm) evenings that are attended by between five / eight (Wednesday) and ten / twenty people (Friday). On

Wednesday mornings 10.30am-12.00 noon there is a coffee morning for the local community attended by between five and ten people.

The church has also started a small food bank to serve the local community in and around Ardwick. This has been undertaken in partnership with Fareshare a charity that is committed to the eradication of hunger in the UK. At the moment the food bank is open every Friday afternoon 3pm-5pm and around 5-6 people turn up each week from the local community.

On Saturdays the entire building is open for community events like birthday parties from 11.00am - 11.00pm but no alcohol is allowed. The capacity for events in the hall is 60 people. The complaint of noise that led to the enforcement action resulting in this planning application was as a result of a Saturday afternoon / evening function by members of the local community where alcohol had been consumed off the premises prior to the event. To ensure this doesn't happen again the church will strictly enforce a no alcohol policy and all functions will end by 11pm. The church are happy for this to be a condition to the anticipated planning consent. It is understood there have been no other complaints about noise from the building which has been used by the church since December 2015.

5. Noise Sensitive Properties – Acoustic Report

The Church building is free-standing. The most sensitive uses in the locality are the residential properties on Cotter Street and Paddock Street. The nearer properties are those on Cotter Street, which are, at their closest:

- approx. 15m from the unperforated gable to the Worship Space; this wall consists of two separate skins of solid masonry (fair faced concrete blockwork internally, facing brick externally) which will have excellent sound attenuation of around 46 dB;
- approx. 21m from the emergency exit of the Worship Space (which does not however face any dwellings); this door (closed) will have a sound attenuation of around 30 dB; and,
- approx. 25m from the roof windows towards the west end of the Worship Space; these windows (closed) will have a sound attenuation of around 30 dB and even open will still achieve an attenuation of 10 to 15 dB;

Nearby dwellings are of relatively modern masonry construction and will have similar amounts of noise attenuation as a result of this construction.

The applicant's hours of use of the building fall between 8:00am and 11:00pm and therefore do not encroach into the period specified in BS 8233:2014 during which ambient indoor noise levels in bedrooms should be 30 dB LAeq (as cited in the Council's Planning & Noise

Technical Guidance 2015). Night-time noise is therefore not considered further. Target internal noise levels for the nearby dwellings would therefore be 35 dB LAeq or (living room) or the slightly higher figure of 40 dB LAeq (dining).

The largest sound impact created by the use is worship services on Sundays, which includes the use of amplified keyboard, guitar and vocal music and un-amplified congregational singing in the Worship Space. Published figures suggest that in the very worst case this might produce a sound level of 100 dB at 1 m from the speakers; however this figure derives from discotheques and the like and it is probable that the actual sound levels will be significantly lower – a level of 100 dB would almost certainly lead to complaints from the congregation themselves.

Activities in the dining area, when let out for parties and social functions may on occasion produce similar levels of noise, but this room is more distant from the residential properties and has no windows facing any of the residences. Other activities in this room would produce significantly less noise; for example conversation at 1m = c 60 dB and conversation with background music c.75 dB. After attenuation by the building fabric these activities will produce no noticeable external noise effects.

The figures assumed for the sound insulation of the elements of construction of the church buildings are set out above. The figures assumed for the construction of the nearby potentially affected dwellings are similar.

On this basis, the shortest sound path from Church to dwelling interiors is subject to attenuation as follows:

- Church walls; 46 dB attenuation;
- dwelling window; 30 dB (closed) or 15 dB (open) attenuation; and,
- attenuation due to distance of 15 m between the Church and the nearest dwelling will reduce a noise level of 70 dB at 1 m from the exterior of the building to 46 dB at the face of the nearest dwelling. (By way of comparison, frequently cited figures for ambient noise rate 'moderate rainfall' at 50 dB and normal conversation at 60dB).

It is therefore unlikely that the existing / proposed use of the Church buildings will have any significant noise impact on any nearby noise sensitive properties.

6. Waste Management Strategy

Grace City Church have entered into a commercial waste removal contract with B&M Waste Services[2]. Under this contract waste collected in bins throughout the building can be emptied into a commercial bin kept in a bin compound shown on the car park layout plan. The waste permitted in the contract agreement includes paper and cardboard, glass, small plastic, small metals (cans etc); bio degradable kitchen waste and mixed municipal waste. Waste is collected every fortnight on Fridays.

The bin compound is in the small car park accessed off Nivin Street. In addition to the large commercial waste bin the plan shows three smaller recycling bins and the church and waste contractor are exploring whether this is feasible / viable as part of the contract.

7. Setting of an Adjacent Listed Building

The former Parish Rooms are not a listed building but the former St Thomas Church is the second oldest church in the City dating from the Georgian period and is Grade 2 Listed Building. The Parish Rooms were built at much later date (1906) and are behind the former St Thomas Church building. They are, however, attractive buildings that have fallen into slight disrepair during their occupation by the photographic studio and subsequent vacancy. The occupation of the building by the Grace City Church will ensure regular maintenance can resume and that there is the revenue stream to pay for this. As a backland site the development does not directly affect the setting of this Listed Building and as there are no external alterations to the elevations other than the sign which also forms part of this application, this is not really an issue. The proposal therefore complies with Policy DC19.

8. Design

The final consideration is design although as there are no proposals to change the elevations or physical appearance of the building then this is not really a major issue in the consideration of this planning application. The proposed 3 sq m signage that has already been attached to the extension wall on the Nivin Street extension c. 215cm above ground level does not detract from that building and is appropriate in scale and siting.

[2] B&M Waste Services, Iris House, Dock Road South, Bromborough, Wirral CH62 4SQ

Conclusions

This supporting statement is submitted in support of a planning application for a change of use of former Parish Rooms from B1 Photographic Studio to D1 Place of Worship. The proposal does not involve any physical change to the elevations of the former Parish Rooms other than the erection of the signage on the Nivin Street elevation of the extension building that also forms part of this planning application. The previous B1 use of the building is no longer viable. The main issues in the determination of this planning application are the loss of an employment building; improving the living conditions and environment of the neighbourhoods of Central Manchester; Access; Residential Amenity; Noise; Waste Management and Setting of an adjacent listed building; and, Design of the Signage. It has been demonstrated in this supporting statement that the proposal complies with the relevant Core Strategy and UDP planning polices with regards to these planning issues; and, that the proposal forms a sustainable development under the NPPF (para 7) definition and therefore the application should be supported by the Council.