

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - Date: 11 August 2010

Report of the Executive Head of Planning, Transportation and Highways.

Ref: C2010/62549/OUT	WARD: C14 / CAR STH & CLOCK	Time Taken: 15 weeks, 1 day
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Site: Former BIBRA Site Woodmansterne Road Carshalton Surrey SM5 4DS

Proposal: Outline application to determine access, layout, scale and appearance for a single storey building to provide a gospel hall with associated 111 space car and coach park, and access only to be determined for a two storey building to provide an 80 bedroomed care home with nursing care for the elderly and associated car parking.

Applicant: Benhill Gospel Trust

Agent: Town Planning Solutions Ltd.

Recommendation:

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION

Subject to (1) the prior written conclusion of a legal agreement within a period of 6 months from the date of this resolution, or such longer period as may be agreed in writing by the Executive Head of Planning & Transportation and (2) no adverse direction by the Mayor of London to whom the application must be referred as development within the Green Belt.

Reasons for report to Committee: The development represents major development within the Green Belt with a recommendation for approval.

Summary of why application proposals are considered acceptable

The proposed development is considered appropriate to a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt and to otherwise represent an acceptable form of development within the Green Belt.

1 BACKGROUND

Site

- 1.1 The application concerns the former BIBRA (British Industrial Biological Research Association) site in Carshalton. The existing buildings, most of which are currently vacant, date from 1963 with later additions. They consist of laboratories, offices and stores within inter-connecting two and three storey buildings. Within the grounds there is a detached caretaker's bungalow, which was last used as offices, and parking for about 100 cars. The total site area is 6.7 hectares.

- 1.2 The Benhill Gospel Trust purchased the site in April 2006. The northern wing of the main building is currently used by the Trust as a primary school.
- 1.3 The site lies on rising land on the east side of Woodmansterne Road from which there is a single point of access. The site is partially screened from the road by a belt of mature trees that forms part of the Wellfield Plantation and Woodmernsterne Road Woodland Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).
- 1.4 The existing buildings and associated car parking occupy only about one third of the site. The remainder is open pasture, much of which is presently used for the grazing of horses by the neighbouring riding centre. The buildings occupy the highest part of the site in the north-eastern corner and the grazing land the lower areas to the west and south.

Surroundings

- 1.5 To the north of the site is an area of open space contiguous with the SINC. Within this is Wellfield Gardens, a modern housing development of 36 detached houses. To the south and south-east is the Diamond Riding Centre for disabled riders and associated paddocks. To the east are the extensive grounds of the former Orchard Hill Hospital, part of which is currently being developed to provide new school buildings and playing fields for Stanley Park High School. To the west, on the opposite side of Woodmansterne Road, are extensive areas of open space comprising The Oaks Sports Centre and Golf Course and to the south of that the Oaks Country Park.

Site Specific Designation

- 1.6 The application site, together with all adjoining areas of open space, lie within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The trees that line the front the site form part of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).
- 1.7 The application site was allocated as a Major Developed Site (MDS) within the Green Belt under the Core Planning Strategy to the Local Development Framework, adopted December 2009. The adjoining Orchard Hill site is also an MDS within the Green Belt.

Relevant Planning History

- 1.8 Permission was granted in 1962 for two storey laboratories, an office block and animal house.
- 1.9 A number of permissions were granted between 1963 and 1994 for alterations and extensions to the original buildings and for the erection within the grounds of temporary buildings for office use.
- 1.10 A certificate of lawfulness was issued in March 1997 confirming that the existing lawful use of the property is offices and laboratories within Class B1.
- 1.11 In November 2007 the Benhill Gospel Trust submitted an application to replace all the buildings on the site with a gospel hall, 111 space car park and 14 detached

houses. This was refused in April 2008. An appeal against the decision was heard at a public inquiry in July and August 2009 and dismissed by letter dated 3 September 2009. The appeal was dismissed principally on the grounds that the spread of housing would be detrimental to the openness of this part of the Green Belt.

- 1.12 Permission was granted in December 2007, to the Benhill Gospel Trust, for the use of the northern wing of the main building as a primary school for temporary period of three years. This was made permanent on 27 April 2010.
- 1.13 Permission was granted on 18 May 2010 for the redevelopment of the adjoining Orchard Hill site to provide a new secondary school to replace Stanley Park High School and up to 246 houses and the construction of a new road across the former BIBRA site to provide a secondary access to the school from Woodmansterne Road. The permission for the school is subject to a condition that the school may not be open until the access across the former BIBRA site is made available for public use.

2 APPLICATION PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The application seeks permission for the demolition of all the buildings on the site and their replacement with a gospel hall and 80 bed care home with nursing care for the elderly. The gospel hall would be served by a 110 space car park. The application is submitted on behalf of the Benhill Gospel Trust.
- 2.2 The application is submitted in outline form but with different levels of detail for the gospel hall and care home. For the gospel hall, the application seeks to determine access to, layout, scale and appearance with only landscaping reserved for later consideration. For the care home, only access is to be determined at this stage with all other matters reserved.
- 2.3 The gospel hall would be the central meeting place in Sutton of an assembly of Christians known as the Brethren. The Brethren currently have five halls in the borough, each with an average congregation of 40. The new hall would replace the current central hall at Benhill Wood Road. All 200 members in Sutton would meet at the new hall for the larger meetings of the week of which there are normally three, on Sunday afternoon and Tuesday and Friday evenings. A weekly central meeting involving members from neighbouring boroughs would attract 600 people. This would take place on alternate Sunday mornings and Wednesday and Saturday evenings. A special meeting held six times a year would attract up to 1050 people.
- 2.4 The application is accompanied by a travel plan strategy that describes how the Trust would seek to minimise the impact of travel on the environment by reducing the use of the private car. A full travel plan to include the provision of a private shuttle bus service to the nearest railway station and management arrangements for the car park when the larger weekly and special meetings are held would need to be secured by planning condition.
- 2.5 The gospel hall would be of a simple utilitarian design common to the Brethren's premises throughout the world but in this clad in horizontal weather boarding over a red brick plinth. The applicants have agreed to incorporate a living green roof

over the entire building to promote wildlife and help soften the appearance of the building.

- 2.6 The construction of both the gospel hall and care home would require the re-contouring of the upper part of the site to provide a level surface for both buildings and the extensive areas of car parking. To accommodate the two storey care home the land would be lowered in part by up to 3 metres. No part of the new development would exceed the highest point of the existing laboratory buildings.
- 2.7 The care home would provide nursing care for people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, the need for which has emerged from discussions with the Council in its role as housing and social services authorities. The care home would be built immediately north of the gospel hall. The submitted drawings of the care home are entirely illustrative but indicate a traditional form of construction in the style of a free-standing country mansion. Scale parameters submitted with the application show a building with a maximum length of 76 metres, a maximum depth of 38 metres and a height to eaves level of 5.25 metres. A 24 space car park is shown to the rear of the building.
- 2.8 The application relies on the existing access from Woodmansterne Road. However, illustrative plans submitted with the application show the potential to accommodate a new access road across the site to serve the new Stanley Park High School and to link both the gospel hall and care home to the new road.

3 PUBLICITY

Adjoining Occupiers Notified

- 3.1 **Method of notification:** 50 letters dated 12 or 24 May 2010 were sent to addresses in Wellfield Gardens, Woodmansterne Road and Oakhurst Rise. Site and press notices were posted on 12 May 2010.
- 3.2 **Number of letters received:** 1 opposed to development, 5 in support, 1 making comment.
- 3.3 **Addresses of letters:** Those opposed: Carshalton-on-the-Hill Residents' Associations. Those in support: The Byway, Buckingham Way, Warnham Court Road, Fullerton Road and Beeches Walk. Those commenting: Woodmansterne Road.
- 3.4 **Summary of material responses:** Those opposed: The gospel hall and care home would represent an over-development of the site. Two such large buildings, with their attendant car parks etc. would not offer 'openness' or 'reflect the semi-rural character of the area' contrary to the planning criteria for the site set out in the Site Development Policies DPD. Large numbers of people would arrive at the gospel hall by private car and coach, with limited provision made for coach parking. Likelihood of parking on the proposed road through the site, with all the problems associated with reduced width and sight lines on corners. The proposed access to the care home is unsuitable. The existing entrance/exit is onto Woodmansterne Road which has fast moving traffic and is unlit at night

- 3.5 Those in support: The current derelict building is an eyesore and the development would enhance the appearance of the area. There is a desperate need for a new hall to replace the existing one in Benhill Wood Road where there is insufficient space to park off the street causing a danger to pedestrians and nuisance to neighbours.
- 3.6 Those commenting: Concern about increased air pollution from traffic and water pollution; neighbouring hospital was developed as an escape from the atmosphere in London. Concern that applicants may wish to extend into neighbouring open spaces.
- 3.7 **Non-material responses:** none

Official Consultation

3.8 **Internal:**

Senior Traffic Engineer: The submitted estimates of traffic generation show that the impact on Woodmansterne Road is likely to be minimal. However, estimates of mode splits show a high dependence on car trips and the importance of managing the gospel hall car park for each central and special meeting to avoid overflow car parking. A dedicated private shuttle bus service to the nearest rail station ought to be provided from the outset and will need to be secured through the proposed travel plan.

Highways and Waste Management: No objection

Landscape and Trees Officer: No objection

Biodiversity Team: The recommendations within the submitted Ecological Assessment need to be undertaken in full, including the preparation of a management plan to help guide the future management of the site. The site has the potential to deliver some moderate biodiversity gains. Recommend the addition of a green roof to the gospel hall to fit in with the surrounding chalk grassland. These matters should be secured by condition.

Sustainability consultant: Satisfied on the basis of the data submitted that the scheme can achieve a Very Good BREEAM rating and 20% CO2 savings in line with policy. Conditions to secure this are recommended.

Adult Social Services & Housing: The development will increase the supply of care home with nursing single bedrooms with ensuite facilities in Sutton. The focus on dementia will meet the anticipated increase in demand for dementia care and increase choice for older people and their families.

Director of Education: No response to date.

3.9 **External:**

Thames Water: Standard advice regarding surface water drainage. No objection in respect of sewerage infrastructure.

Sutton and East Surrey Water: No response to date

Environment Agency: No objection subject to recommended conditions to prevent the risk of flooding, protect water quality and deal with possible ground contamination.

Greater London Authority: On balance, the application does not comply with the London Plan but the following changes might remedy this: further justification of the need for a care home; reduction in the area of hardstanding by merging the parking areas and making them smaller; review the design of the gospel hall and in particular the roof; submit an accessibility statement; submit an energy statement; submit a more detailed travel plan; confirm the management of the car park and increase the amount of cycle parking. (NOTE: Several of these comments have been addressed in amendments to the application and/or additional reports. These are referred to in the report. The application in its amended form will be referred formally to the GLA following a resolution of the Committee to either grant or refuse permission.)

Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Officer: Car parking at rear of care home is likely to have poor natural surveillance. Recommends the care home seeks Secure by Design accreditation.

3.10 **Councillor representations:** None received in relation to this application.

4 MATERIAL PLANNING POLICIES

4.1 National Planning Guidance

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPG2 – Green Belts
PPG13 – Transport

4.2 The London Plan

- 2A.1, Sustainability criteria
- 3A.13, Special needs and specialist housing
- 3A.17, Addressing the needs of London's diverse population
- 3A.18, Protection and enhancement of social infrastructure and community facilities
- 3C.1, Integrating transport and development
- 3C.2, Matching development to transport capacity
- 3C.22, Improving conditions for cyclists
- 3C.23, Parking strategy
- 3D.9, Green Belt
- 3D.17, London's countryside and urban fringe
- 4A.1, Tackling climate change
- 4A.3, Sustainable design and construction
- 4B.1, Design principles for a compact city
- 5E.1, The strategic priorities for South West London

4.3 **Sutton Local Development Framework**

- PMP9, Open spaces network
- BP4, Education and skills
- DP3, Infrastructure requirements and delivery
- Site Development Policies: Proposed Submission DPD

4.4 **Sutton Unitary Development Plan (saved policies)**

- OE22, Sites of importance for nature conservation
- BE11, Protection of borough views
- CL3, New community facilities
- G/TR5, Transport impact of new development
- TR18, New development and transport
- TR20, New development and public transport accessibility

4.5 **Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents:**

- SPD12, Orchard Hill

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The principal considerations in relation to this application (including whether any material planning objections have been reasonably addressed) are considered to be:

- Green Belt policy
- Design and impact on the openness of the Green Belt
- Compatibility with the Site Development Policies DPD
- Traffic generation & sustainability

Green Belt Policy

5.2 The whole of the application site is designated a Major Developed Site (MDS) within the Green Belt. As such it provides a significant development opportunity. Core Strategy Policy PMP9 confirms the MDS status of the adjoining Orchard Hill site in addition to extending this to the application site.

5.3 Policies for the development of the site are set out in the Site Development Policies: Proposed Submission Development Plan Document (DPD), January 2010, agreed by the Council for consultation purposes, wherein the site appears as Site B5. The DPD allocates the site for mixed community and residential use. The requirements of the DPD are discussed in 5.21 to 5.26 below.

5.4 Government guidance on redevelopment within a Green Belt is set out in PPG2, Green Belts. Paragraph 3.4 of PPG2 lists those exceptional circumstances when the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt might be permissible. These include the limited infilling or redevelopment of an MDS that has been identified in an adopted local plan. Criteria for the redevelopment of an MDS are set out in paragraph C4 of Annex C to PPG2. These are that redevelopment should:

- Have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it and where possible have less;
- Contribute to the achievement of objectives of the Green Belt;
- Not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
- Not occupy a larger area of the site than existing buildings.

5.5 London Plan Policy 3D.9, Green Belt states, inter-alia, that the Mayor will and boroughs should protect the green belt and that proposals to alter green belt boundaries should be considered through the DPD process. Positive uses for the green belt that realise the potential to improve the environmental and landscape quality and accessibility of the land should be encouraged.

5.6 The impact of the proposals on the openness of the Green Belt relative to the existing situation is considered in detail in the following section.

Design and impact on the openness of the Green Belt

5.7 The application seeks to determine access to, layout, scale and appearance of the gospel hall with only landscaping reserved for later consideration. Only access to the care home is to be determined at this stage with all other matters reserved. However, the care home would be located within a clearly defined area between the gospel hall and northern boundary of the site and this, combined with the known scale parameters of the building, make it possible to assess the overall spread of the development and its impact on the openness of this part of the Green Belt.

5.8 The gospel hall and care home would have a smaller foot print than the buildings they would replace. The existing laboratory buildings have a foot print of 4980 square metres. The gospel hall and care home would have a combined foot print of 3960 square metres inclusive of canopied entrances to the former, a reduction of about one fifth. The scheme is therefore considered compliant with the third criteria of Annex C to PPG2 listed in 5.4 above.

5.9 The existing laboratory building has a maximum height of 12.6 metres. By comparison, the gospel hall and care home (the latter shown indicatively only) would be, respectively, 7.7 and 10.3 metres high to ridge level and 4.5 and 5.25 high to eaves level. Because of changes in ground level, parts of the new buildings would stand higher above datum than the lower parts of the existing laboratory buildings but, overall, the scheme is considered compliant with the fourth criteria of Annex C to PPG2.

5.10 It is necessary to also consider the overall spread of development inclusive of car parking and other areas of hardstanding. Annex C to PPG2 states:

“The character and dispersal of proposed redevelopment will need to be considered as well as its footprint. For example many houses may together have a much smaller footprint than a few large buildings but may be unacceptable because of their dispersal over a large part of the site and enclosed gardens may have an adverse impact on the character of the Green Belt compared with the current development.”

The applicant's previous application for a gospel hall and 14 houses failed at appeal largely on these grounds.

- 5.11 There is at present a large car park close to the north-eastern corner of the site. In broad terms, the proposal is to build the care home on the site of the car park and adjoining northern wing of the laboratory building. The gospel hall would occupy the site of the central portion of the laboratory building. The land presently occupied by the southern wing of the laboratory would be freed of built development and occupied instead by the car park of the gospel hall. Thus the overall effect of the development would be to shift the buildings northwards and relocate the majority of the open car parking from the north-eastern corner to a more central position within the site. The area covered by buildings and hardstandings combined would be slightly more than at present (11,300 compared to 10,900 square metres, an increase of around 4%) but the north-south extent of development would be no greater than at present.
- 5.12 The repositioning of the built development towards the north-eastern corner of the site would have the benefit of making it less visible in most views. The site is presently well screened from public view by the belt of trees that lines Woodmansterne Road (the SINC) and is only readily visible through the single point of access off Woodmansterne Road. Montages prepared by the applicants show that the care home would be largely hidden in views from the road by an existing clump of trees in the centre of the site. The SINC would be unaffected.
- 5.13 Both the care home and gospel hall would be cut into the sloping land. In addition, the gospel hall would be positioned substantially closer to the rear (eastern) boundary of the site than the existing laboratory building and further from the open pasture that now occupies the majority of the southern end of the site. Montages show that it would be substantially less prominent than the laboratory building in key views.
- 5.14 All significant existing trees within the site and the large hedgerow along the eastern boundary with the Orchard Hill site would be retained. The re-contouring of the upper part of the site would require the construction of a 4 metre high retaining wall approximately 9 metres distant from the hedgerow.
- 5.15 The 110 space gospel hall car park would occupy a prominent position close to the highest part of the site. The smaller 24 space care home car park would be located behind the building and out of public view. In consequence the successful integration of the development into the Green Belt will depend to a large extent on appropriate screening and landscaping of the gospel hall car park. The GLA has raised concern about the extent of the car parking and has recommended that the two uses share a single car park so that the total number of parking spaces might be reduced. However, the applicants are clear that it would be both impractical and unacceptable to the congregation to share car parking with the care home.
- 5.16 As part of the planned re-contouring of the upper part of the site approximately 1.5 metre high embankments would be created along the western and southern edges of the gospel hall car park and it is considered that these together with appropriate additional landscaping ought to screen the majority of parked cars from general view. The applicants have agreed to surface the southern part of the car park in grass-crete or similar to help soften its appearance when not in use.

- 5.17 Coaches would be able to pull-in under an entrance canopy on the southern side of the hall. Some concern remains about the number of large vehicles likely to visit the site for the larger weekly and special meetings when some overflow parking on the private access road can be expected (see 5.29 below) but, on balance, it is considered that and the size and numbers of vehicles would not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of this part of the Green Belt.
- 5.18 The planned construction of an access road through the site to serve the new Stanley Park High School (see 5.24 & 5.25 below) would open up additional views of the care home from the north but it is not considered that this would raise any additional issues about the acceptability of the development in terms of its impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It is considered that the scheme would have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt when viewed from Wellfield Gardens to the north or from the adjoining Diamond Riding Centre to the south and southeast.
- 5.19 The gospel hall would be of a simple design clad in horizontal weather boarding over a red brick plinth. The applicants have agreed to place a living green roof over the entire pitched roof, which should serve to integrate the building into its chalk grassland setting. Subject to appropriate conditions to secure the green roof and appropriate facing materials the design of the gospel hall is considered appropriate to the setting. The design was found to be acceptable by the inspector who heard the appeal in 2009 in respect of the Brethren's previous proposal to build a gospel hall and 14 houses
- 5.20 The design of the two storey care home is reserved for later consideration but indicative drawings submitted with the application show a traditionally designed free-standing building surrounded by ample landscaping.
- 5.21 In summary, the monolithic unbroken mass of the existing laboratory building would be replaced by two physically separate and distinct buildings, providing a more permeable form of development that ought to have a beneficial effect on the openness of this part of the Green Belt. This is considered to outweigh concerns about the additional prominence of the car park and of the regular presence of significant numbers of larger vehicles on the site. Overall, it is considered that the proposals will have no greater and possibly less impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

Compatibility with the Site Development Policies DPD

- 5.22 As previously noted, policies for the development of the site are set out in the Site Development Policies: Proposed Submission Development Plan Document (DPD), January 2010, agreed by the Council for consultation purposes, wherein the site appears as Site B5. The DPD states:

'Any development scheme should pay particular regard to:

- Enabling access to and from the proposed school on the adjoining Orchard Hill site

- Having no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of the Green Belt
- Not exceeding the height of the existing buildings
- Reflecting the semi-rural character of the site
- Enhancing the SINC which is within the boundary of the site
- Remediating the site of any contamination
- Utilising the topography of the site to limit development impact
- Ensuring car parking and roads within the site are unobtrusive
- Improving access by public transport and improving pedestrian and cycle links to and within the site.

- 5.23 Many of the requirements of the DPD reflect the advice set out on Annex C to PPG2. These matters were addressed in the previous section of this report. Conditions are proposed to deal with any contamination remaining from the previous laboratory use in line with advice from the Environment Agency. The application will have no impact on the SINC.
- 5.24 The application relies on the existing access into the site but illustrative plans submitted with the application show how an access to the new Stanley Park High School at Orchard Hill might be constructed to the north of the care home and how both the care home and gospel home linked to the new road. This would be a different, more northerly alignment to that for which permission has already been granted as part of the Orchard Hill development proposals. The applicants anticipate the new road will be the subject of a separate application to be submitted by the Council. The safeguarding of a route for the new road is considered sufficient to comply with the first requirement of the DPD.
- 5.25 It is a condition of the planning permission for the new Stanley Park High School that the new access should be available before the school may open. Negotiations between the Council and Brethren over the exact route of the access and the purchase of the land required to construct it are ongoing and it is therefore important that the outline nature of the application allows for some flexibility in the exact location of the care home and therefore the route of the access. It is possible for example that the final layout will place the care home a little closer to the gospel hall than shown in the indicative plans. The final arrangement might also involve less excavation in order to slightly raise the level of the care home relative to the road. It will be necessary to ensure that the care home is surrounded by enough open space to provide a landscaped setting consistent with DPD requirements.
- 5.26 In the event that the new access is built after the opening of the care home, a short length of road built by the applicants to serve the care home in the interim will become redundant and ought to be removed. The applicants have agreed to enter into a legal agreement to remove any redundant road at their own expense.

Traffic generation & sustainability

- 5.27 The Traffic Statement submitted with the application indicates that, overall, the development would generate less traffic than the former BIBRA use. This is based on traffic measurements taken at comparable existing research facilities in the UK.

- 5.28 These measurements indicate that traffic to the former BIBRA use would have been distributed fairly evenly throughout the day with the exception of the evening peak (17.00 – 18.00 hours) when traffic movements would have peaked at 260 per hour. By comparison, the gospel hall would not produce a regular traffic flow throughout the day and the higher traffic flows generated by the major meetings at the hall would tend to be outside of the peak hours. The existing access would be adequate to serve the gospel hall and care home and the impact of the development on traffic flows in Woodmansterne Road would be minimal.
- 5.29 However, estimates of mode splits show a high dependence on car trips and the importance of managing the gospel hall car park for each central and special meeting to avoid overflow car parking. According to the Transport Statement submitted with the application the thrice-weekly 200 person meetings would generate around 52 cars, which would be well within the capacity of the proposed 110 space car park. But for the weekly 600 person and occasional 1050 person events the number of cars can be expected to exceed the number of parking spaces (151 cars have been recorded on site or parked in surrounding roads at the Brethren's existing Benhill Wood Road site) and some double parking and overflow parking on the private access road leading to the hall can be anticipated. The Brethren would propose to have up to 6 attendants on duty on these occasions to manage the situation.
- 5.30 It is understood that all larger events would be joint meetings with Brethren from other boroughs and would be attended by invitation only. The applicants contend that it would be a relatively straightforward matter to co-ordinate travel arrangements on these occasions, to encourage more members to travel by coach, minibus or public transport. They propose to operate a private shuttle minibus service to and from the site, to collect members and visitors from bus and railway stations. This and other initiatives to reduce travel by private car form part of a travel plan strategy submitted with the application and would need to be secured through a comprehensive Travel Plan for the gospel hall.
- 5.31 Although it is considered that the traffic likely to be generated by the gospel hall and care home combined would not be sufficient to refuse permission on highway capacity or safety grounds, concerns remain that the location of the gospel hall would compare unfavourably with that of the existing central meeting hall in Benhill Wood Road in central Sutton in terms of access to public transport and could not easily be accessed by foot or cycle in preference to the private car. The site has a very low PTAL (public transport accessibility) rating.
- 5.32 Saved UDP Policy G/TR5, 'Transport Impact of New Development' indicates that development generating significant demand for movement should be well served by public transport and other sustainable forms of transport in order to reduce the impact of the development on the environment. Saved Policies TR18, 'New Development and Transport' and TR20, 'New Development and Public transport Accessibility' also need to be considered in the assessment of the application. Government guidance in PP13, 'Transport' clearly seeks to focus facilities and services such as that proposed here in town and district centres and close to public transport.
- 5.33 However, it must be noted that the inspector who heard the appeal in 2009 in respect of the applicant's previous application for a gospel hall and 14 houses

drew the following conclusions when considering the sustainability of the development:

'The evidence produced by the appellants also indicates that Sutton members would move closer to the new hall which would replace the existing city hall at Benhill Wood Road and that there would overall be a reduction in miles travelled even without this (shared transport and high car occupancy). Therefore, despite the limited public transport service to the hall, it seems likely that local meetings would result in a reduction in car miles despite the urban fringe location of the appeal site.'

With regard the larger weekly and special meetings the inspector concluded:

'Because the numbers of people attending are known, it is easier to arrange either shared transport or pickups from local stations and the like. Because of this it seems to me unlikely that a location closer to the centre of Sutton would be significantly more sustainable in terms of transport alternatives. However the site is in an urban fringe location and does not provide a car park large enough to accommodate the potential demand for parking spaces at the largest events. I consider it appropriate that the development is accompanied by a travel plan to encourage public transport use, cycling and pedestrian travel.'

- 5.34 The inspector considered this an unsustainable location for the 14 houses in the absence of the planned new access leading to the adjoining Orchard Hill site. She concluded that without the new road the houses would lack safe pedestrian links and easy access to public transport. This argument is considered to carry less weight in respect of the care home for the elderly now proposed given that the residents of the care home can be expected to have very limited mobility. In any event, a footpath along the eastern side of Woodmansterne Road that was previously overgrown and inaccessible has now been restored and is again available for public use. The applicants have agreed to enter into a legal agreement to pay for the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing over Woodmansterne Road at the northern end of the footpath. It is also recommended that if permission is granted, this should be conditional upon the construction of a footpath within the application site, alongside the existing private access road.
- 5.35 The planned access to Orchard Hill would provide substantially improved links to the wider pedestrian and cycle networks including a new footpath along Woodmansterne Road with a crossing point at its northern end. This would pre-empt the need for the applicants to construct a crossing over Woodmansterne Road or build a footpath across their own land. The access to Orchard Hill would also deliver an improved road junction with Woodmansterne Road. Analysis undertaken at the time of the Orchard Hill application demonstrated that the new junction would be able to deal with the cumulative impact of the Orchard Hill development and any likely development of the former BIBRA site.
- 5.36 In summary, the scheme is considered acceptable in highway terms subject to conditions to secure separate Travel Plans for the gospel hall and care home and a footpath within the site and a legal agreement to secure a safe pedestrian crossing point over Woodmansterne Road should the development be carried out in advance of the construction of the planned access to Orchard Hill. The Council

would wish to monitor the implementation of the Travel Plans and the standard monitoring fee will need to be secured by legal agreement.

Other matters

- 5.37 The applicants have submitted an Energy and Sustainability Statement plus preliminary BREEAM and other calculations. The Council's sustainability consultant is satisfied with the data and supports the application subject to appropriate conditions. The gospel hall is to include solar panels and air source heat pumps.
- 5.38 A Flood Risk Assessment and preliminary Groundwater Risk assessment have been prepared in response to the initial comments of the Environment Agency. These are acceptable to the Agency subject to appropriate conditions.
- 5.39 An Ecological Appraisal has highlighted a number of bio-diversity issues and the need for a bio-diversity management plan. This will be secured by condition. The Council's bio-diversity officer has highlighted the desirability of placing a living green roof over the gospel hall. As previously noted, the applicants are content for this to be secured by condition.
- 5.40 The nearest residential properties to the application site are in Wellfield Gardens to the north. These are separated from the site by a strip of open land. The care home would be approximately 95 metres distant from the houses so no overlooking or other loss of privacy should ensue.
- 5.41 The car park for the gospel hall would be located to the south of the hall, furthest from Wellfield Gardens. Cars entering and leaving the site would use the existing access road approximately 100 metres to the south of the nearest house in Wellfield Gardens. This should not result directly in additional noise disturbance to existing residents.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The application is considered consistent with government Green Belt policy. It meets the criteria of Annex C to PPG2 and, overall, the Council's objectives for the site as set out in the Site Development Policies Proposed Submission DPD. The design of the gospel hall and the acceptability of the location for a gospel hall of this type and size were both agreed by the inspector who heard the applicant's appeal in 2009.
- 6.2 It is clear, however, that the acceptability of the scheme relies on a robust Travel Plan to foster travel other than by private car. The car park will not be large enough to accommodate the demand for parking spaces at the larger events. The Travel Plan will need to secure in particular proper management of the car park at the larger events and the provision from the outset of the development of a private shuttle bus service to local railway stations. This and other measures will be aimed at achieving a greater modal shift away from the car over time.
- 6.3 Permission is recommended subject to no adverse direction from the GLA or adverse comment from the Environment Agency and subject to a legal agreement to secure a monitoring fee for the Travel Plan and, in the event that the gospel hall

and care home are built in advance of the planned access across the site to Orchard Hill, the construction of a safe pedestrian crossing over Woodmansterne Road and the removal of any recently constructed but now redundant lengths of road within the application site.

Background Papers: C2010/62549/OUT

Drawings and other documents can be viewed on line –

- 1) Go to page: <http://82.43.4.135/FASTWEB/welcome.asp>
- 2) Enter Planning Application Number: **C2010/62549**
- 3) Click on Search and View Current Applications
- 4) Click on View Plans & Documents

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