



Planning Statement

Former Line Painting Depot, 19 Grovelands Road, Spencer's Wood.
Reading. RG7 1DP.

Proposed demolition and erection of new church building (Use Class F.1f).

Prepared on behalf of: Sarum Hill GHT.

MARCH 2025

PLANNING STATEMENT

**Proposed demolition and erection of new church building (Use
Class F.1f)**

19 Grovelands Road, Spencer's Wood.

Reading. RG7 1DP

Prepared on behalf of Sarum Hill Gospel Hall Trust.

Prepared by: Andrew Beard MRTPI (Consultant)

Date: 20th March 2025

Reference: ABP/0431



CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Site Location and Description	3
3. Site History	9
4. Policy Context	10
5. Proposed Scheme and Need	16
6. Key Issues	19
7. Conclusions	26



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a new planning application for the demolition of all existing buildings on site and erect a new church building replacement along with associated new car parking and planting layout.
- 1.2 The site is an existing church use as approved in 2024, but the physical condition of the site is causing severe problems in respect of the condition of the former bungalow, the retention of obsolete rear buildings and it will deliver an opportunity to remove frontage parking from the site.
- 1.3 Application 241396 established the site as a church under use class F.1 approved on 11th October 2024 and since used by Sarum Hill GHT.

App. No.:	241396	Site Address:	19 Grovelands Road Spencers Wood Wokingham RG7 1DP
Description:	Full application for the proposed change of use from a depot to a place of worship.		
Received Date:	02/06/2024	Date Valid:	18/06/2024
iLap Ref No.:	None	Decision Date:	11/10/2024
		Decision:	Approve

- 1.4 The application is submitted via Planning Portal reference PP-13842376
- 1.5 The planning application fee via Portal is £1,804 for a new building of 162m²
- 1.6 The submission comprises –
- Application form and certificates
 - Site Location Plan (Portal)

- 853-01 Existing (Fairbank consulting)
- 853-02A Proposed (Fairbank consulting)
- 853-03 Block Plan (Fairbank consulting)
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment January 2025 (Dr Jonty Denton)
- BNG exemption letter February 2025 (Ecology Partnership)
- Planning Statement March 2025 (ABP)
- Statement of Community Involvement March 2025 (ABP)
- Landscape Details March 2025 (ABP)
- CIL Form 1

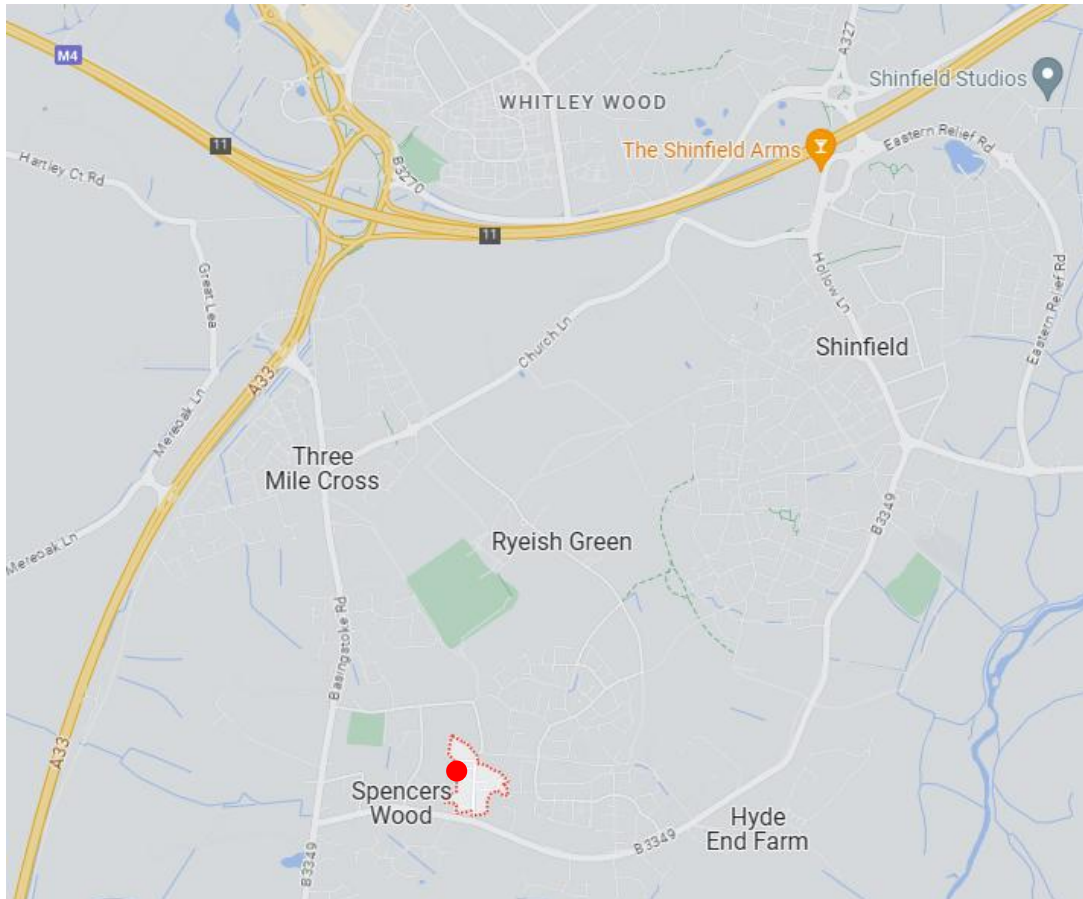
1.7 The site area and context are shown below as part of the location Plan.

SITE

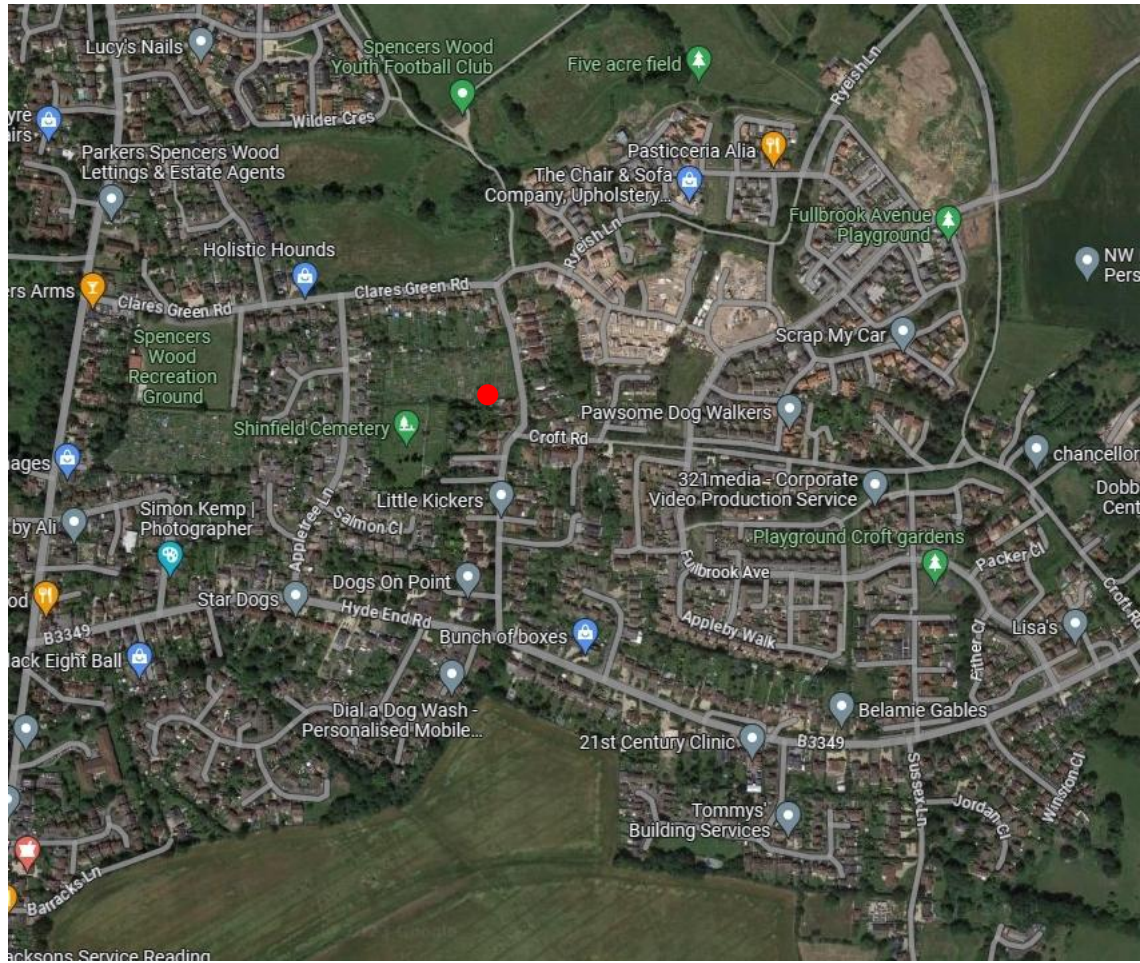


2. SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

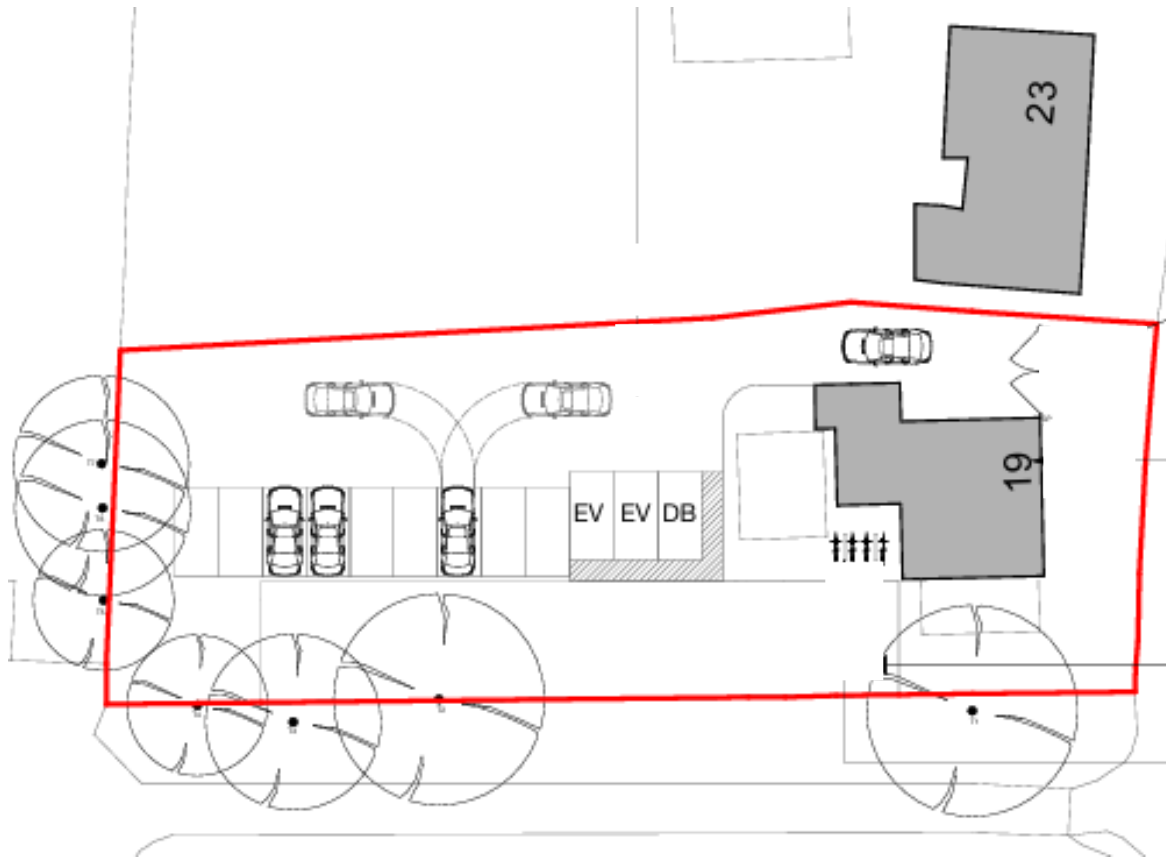
- 2.1 The site is located within the village of Spencer's Wood, south of three Mile Cross and the M4 within Wokingham District Council.



- 2.2 The site is part of an existing urban area with a full range of housing and services.



2.3 The site is currently used as a church with an approved layout in October 2024.



2.4 Photographs of the site in January 2025 are set out below.









3. SITE HISTORY

3.1 The most recent history is approval of application 241396 for use of the former bungalow as a church.

3.2 The use is currently in a very poor building with a cramped use within one room.

3.3 The key conditions of the lawful use as a church are –

Condition 5 & 6 require implementation of the nuclear emergency plan measures.

Condition 7 restricts use within class F to solely a religious meeting place.

Condition 8 allows 4 services of an hour per week for 35 people at a time.



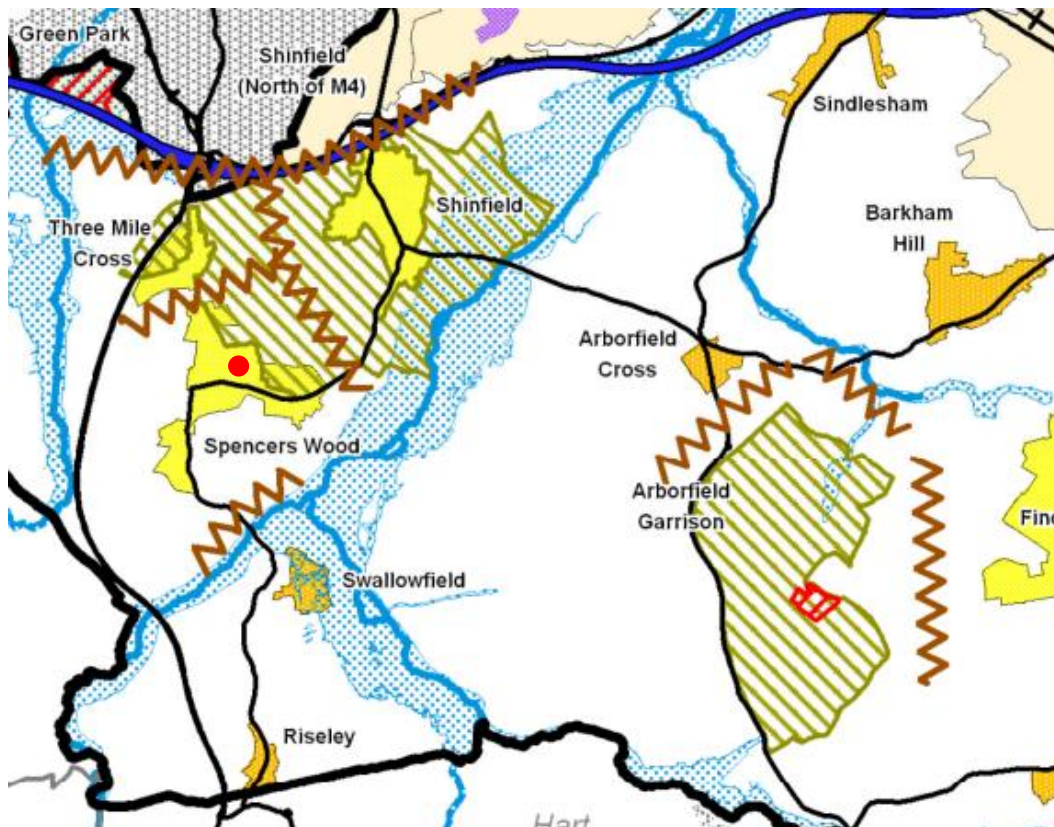
4. POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 The site is within the Wokingham Borough Council administrative area.

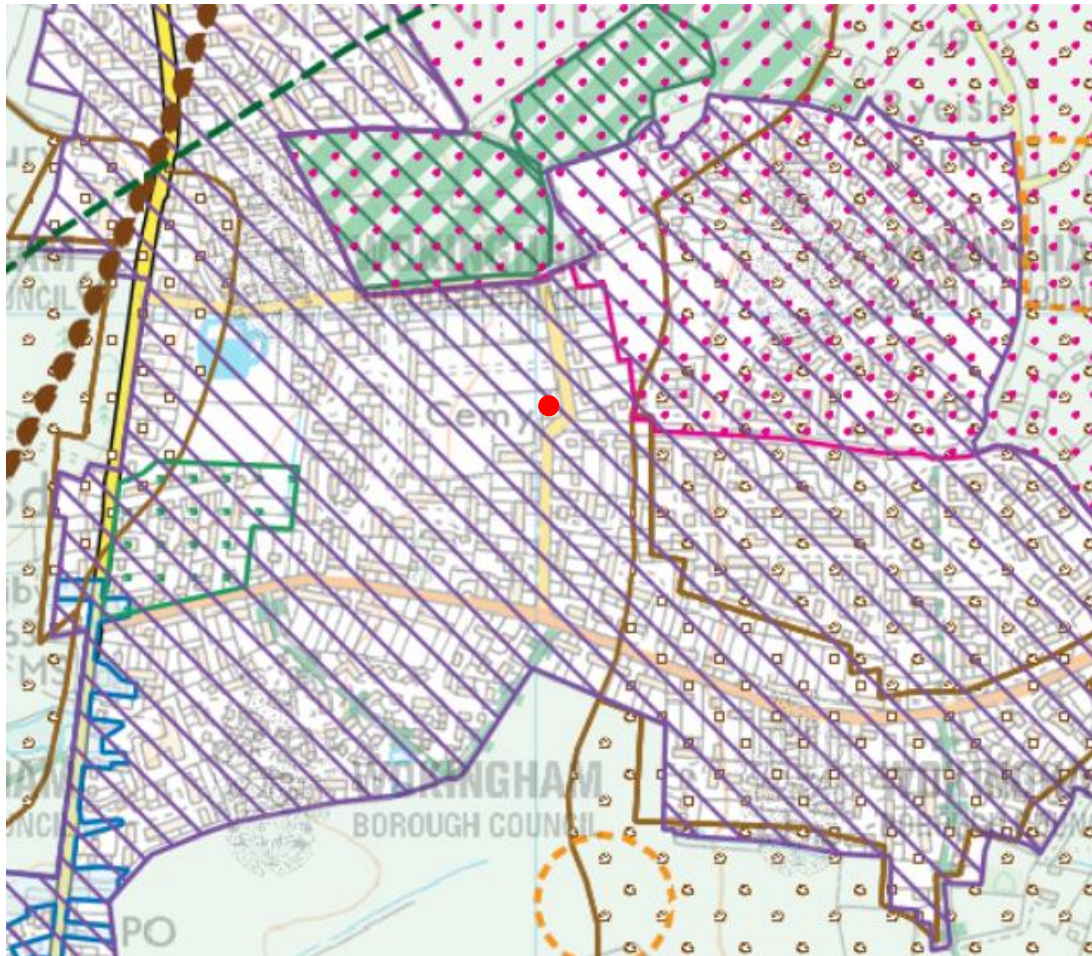
4.2 The Development Plan comprises:

- Core Strategy adopted 2010.
- Managing Development Delivery Local Plan adopted 2014.

4.3 The Core Strategy Key diagram is shown below:



4.4 Proposals Map shows the site within settlement.



4.5 The interactive policy map shows the following policies.

Cross Cutting Policies	
<u>CC02</u>	Development Limits
Atomic Weapons Establishment	
<u>TB04</u>	Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield
Core Strategy Policies	
<u>CP8</u>	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
<u>CP9</u>	Scale and location of development proposals

CP3 - General Principles for development

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.
- d) Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;
- e) Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;
- f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;
- g) Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;
- h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;
- i) Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land; and
- j) Do not lead to a loss of community or recreational facilities/land or infrastructure unless suitable alternative provision is available.

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and streetscenes and where required Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes.

Policy CC02: Development Limits

1. Development limits for each settlement are defined on the Policies Map.
2. Planning permission for proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where they can demonstrate that the development, including boundary treatments, is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.
3. Development proposals within the areas allocated as SDL in the adopted Core Strategy (policies CP18-21) will be permitted that are within the identified development limits unless an acceptable alternative has been agreed through the granting of planning permission accompanied by a deliverable SDL-wide:
 - a. Comprehensive masterplan; and
 - b. Infrastructure Delivery Plan which:
 - i. Ensures that the applicant funds and delivers an appropriate share of the SDL infrastructure; and
 - ii. Does not prejudice the comprehensive delivery and implementation of the wider SDL

Policy TB04: Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield	
1. Development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of "Blue light" services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield. 2. The applicant will need to provide this information where the proposal exceeds the scale of development detailed below for the consultation zone as defined on the Policies Map.	
Consultation Zone (Distance from AWE Burghfield)	Scale of development
Inner (0 - 1.5 km) <i>This corresponds with the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for the site</i>	All residential or non-residential applications where one or more additional person may live, work, shop and/or visit (all applications except house extensions, shop fronts, advertisements, Listed Building, Conservation Area consent, prior notifications and telecommunications).
Middle (1.5 – 3 km)	All residential or non-residential applications where 50 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit.
Outer (3 - 5 km)	All residential or non-residential applications where 500 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit.

4.6 The site is within the adopted Neighbourhood Plan – Shinfield 2017.

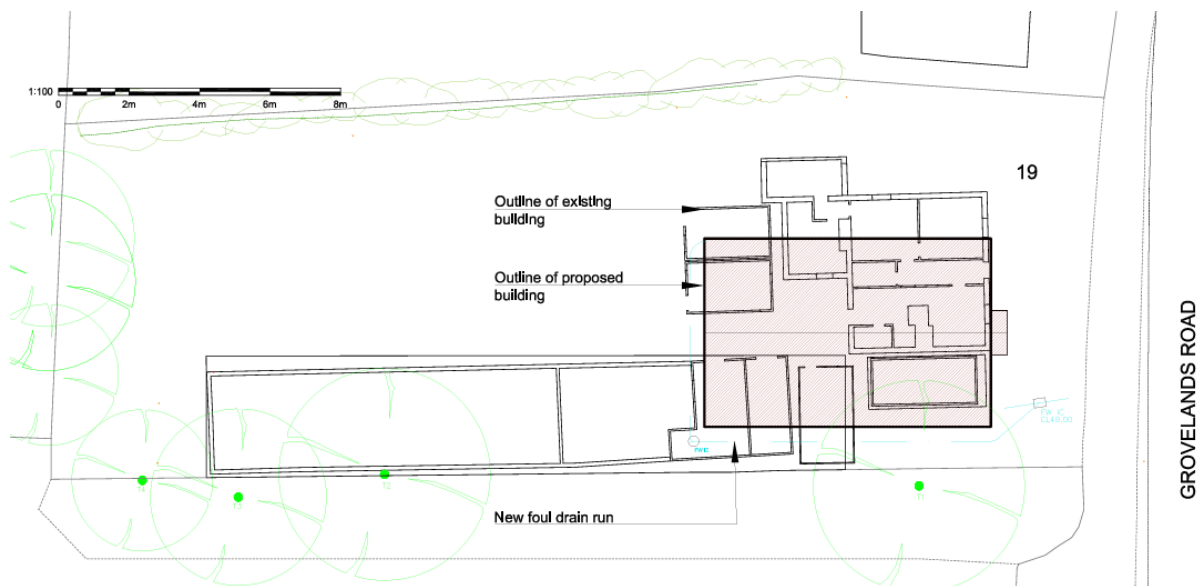
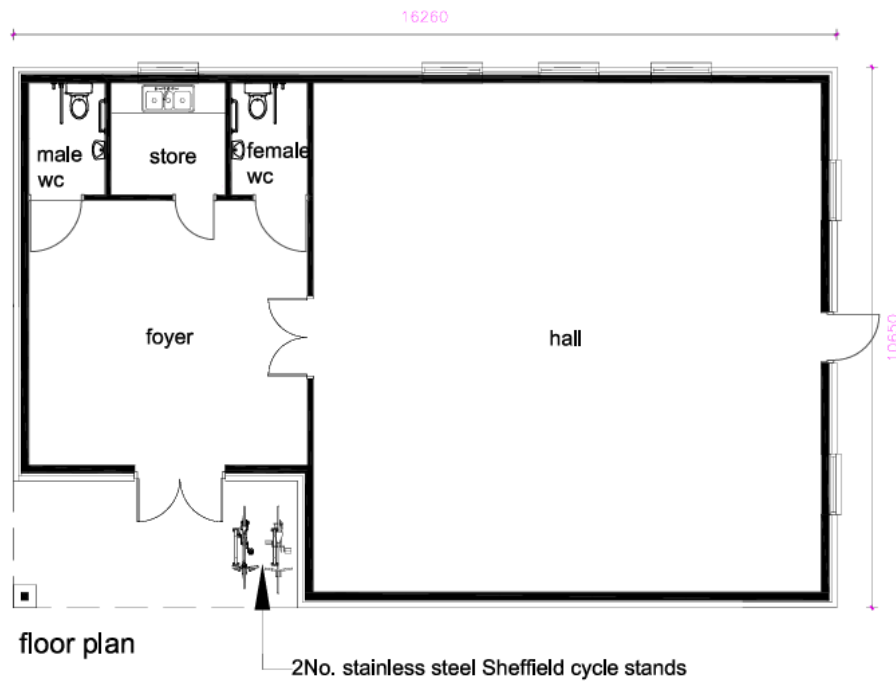
Policy 1: Location of Development In Shinfield Parish, development within the Development limits (as illustrated in Fig 2), will be supported; development adjacent to the Development Limits will only be supported where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts.



5. PROPOSED SCHEME AND NEED

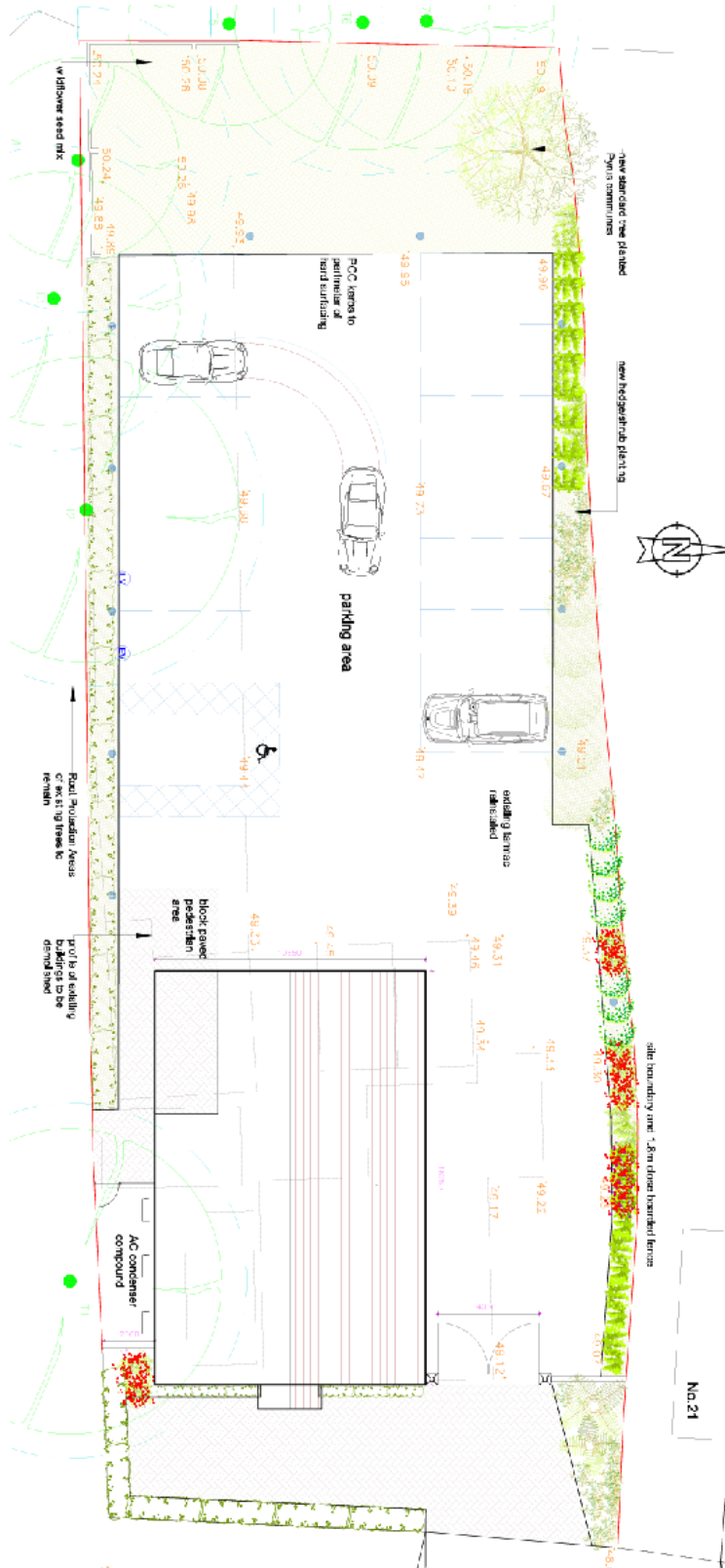
- 5.1 The site is in very poor condition with a leaking roof, lifting floors and very energy inefficient. As well as the former bungalow there are a range of existing extensions, containers and rear buildings unused and unsightly.
- 5.2 The building has proved to be inefficient and unusable and a poor environment for family use.
- 5.3 It is proposed to demolish all existing buildings and build one new church hall designed to reflect the original bungalow.





- 5.4 The new hall is 162m² and there will be a reduction in buildings on the site and also there will be new grass areas introduced to the site, which is currently all concrete surfacing.

- 5.5 Parking will be 15 spaces to the rear, cycle, disabled parking is included along with EV charging points. The proposed site layout is set out below.



6. KEY ISSUES

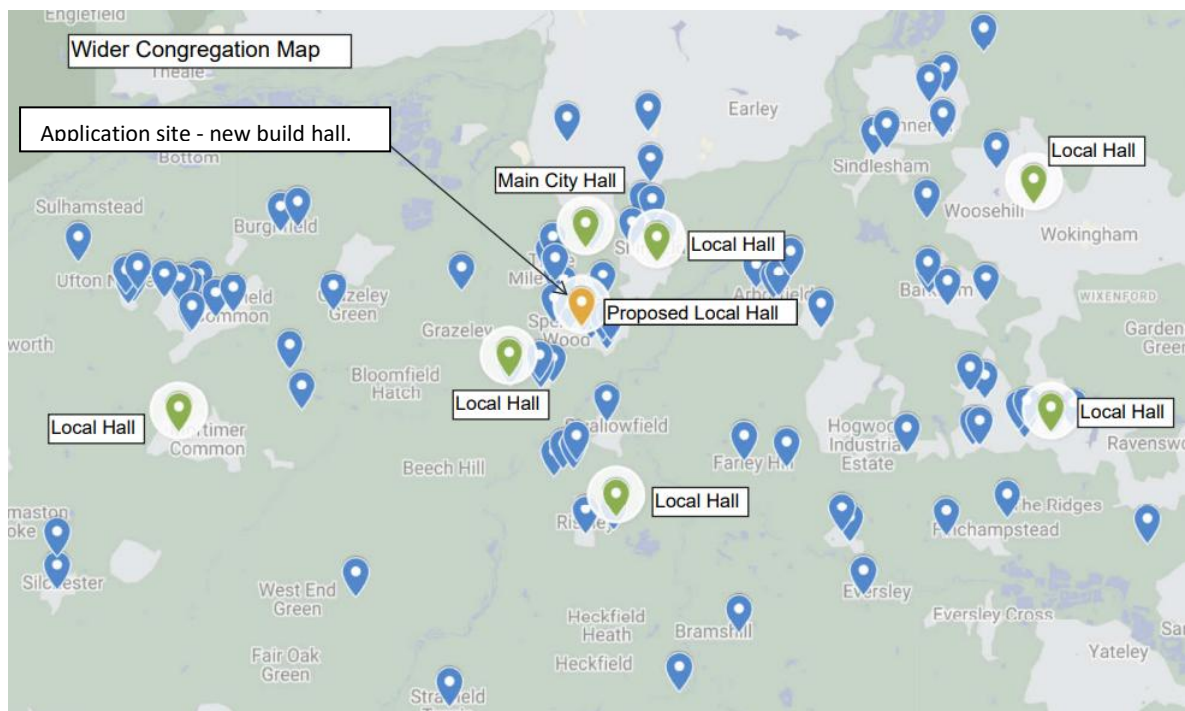
Principle of development

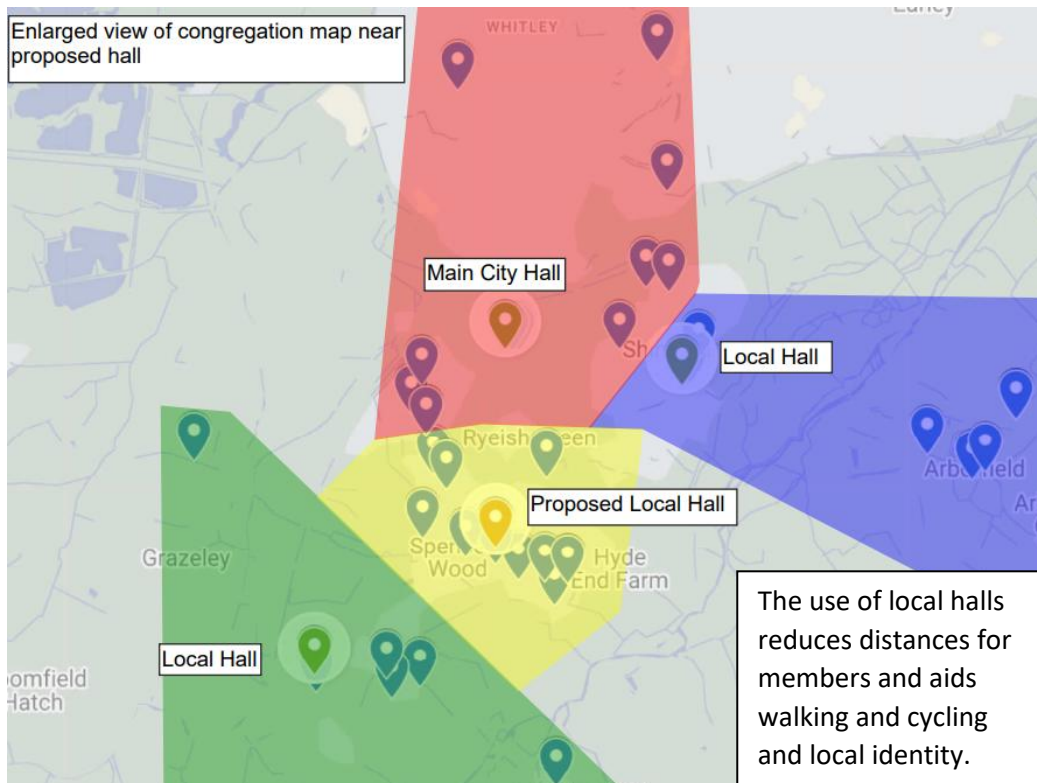
- 6.1 The principle of development as a church is acceptable as it is within the settlement boundary and thus a sustainable location and the use as a church is already established by permission 241396.
- 6.2 A new building on the site is acceptable in principle by policy and use subject to detailed issues such as design, ecology, transport etc.
- 6.3 In terms of a sustainable settlement site there is a presumption in favour of development.

Is the use acceptable in transport grounds?

- 6.4 The church use is already permitted with 12 rear parking spaces and the access is already in use.
- 6.5 The new church hall will allow a greater capacity of attendees from 35 up to 50 but the previous condition should not be imposed as the hall has a natural capacity of seating but also needs to cater for occasional visitors.
- 6.6 The 4 services per week are not proposed to be increased.

- 6.7 The new hall will serve the local community as previously set out with all use off peak.
- 6.8 Also the site can be used by walking and cycling from households within the settlement.
- 6.9 The new build hall will allow for growth for some families that may move into the area. It replaces an established permitted hall.





6.10 The access is already in place and operational with visibility splays as an existing use, and the yard is already surfaced, but unmarked. The new application will allocate marked spaces for cars, EV charging, disabled and cycling and reduce rear concrete with new planting.

6.11 Congregation members would not park on the road, there is ample space to the rear and social and community awareness is a key part of the church principles.

Is the use acceptable in terms of residential amenity?

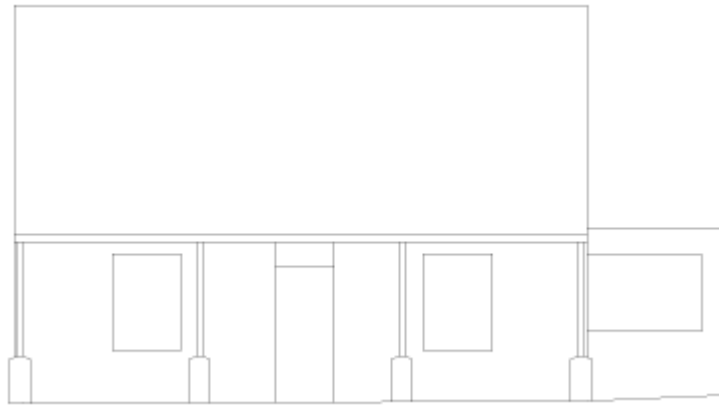
- 6.12 The use as a church is already established and the slight increase in people and parking will not adversely harm the neighbours amenity. It will visually improve living conditions for neighbours in terms of outlook and increased planting. It will remove the current run down appearance of the site within the street.
- 6.13 Prior to submission of the application the Trust engaged in local consultation, which is set out in full in the SCI report to accompany the application.
- 6.14 There were two attendees who appeared to support the scheme, with questions raised about construction noise. This can be time conditioned and a CEMP conditioned to avoid impact on residents. The demolition and construction should be relatively short term given the minor scale of the site and building.
- 6.15 In planning terms there will be no adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining neighbours.

Design

- 6.16 The scheme will enhance the street scene.
- 6.17 The new building will reflect the existing building, but improve it with a front porch and gable addressing the road.



EXISTING



east elevation

EXISTING



east elevation

PROPOSED



STREET SCENE.

Landscaping and ecology

- 6.18 The buildings have been assessed for bat roosts as demolition is proposed with a phase 1 survey. The conclusions are –

"The buildings are a prefabricated, flat-roofed cabin, a wooden shed and an open fronted storage barn with attached flat-roofed workshop and changing area.

There were no signs of any historic bat activity in any of the structures. None of the structures have openings exploitable by crevice roosting bats and therefore have negligible potential and phase 2 surveys are not recommended."

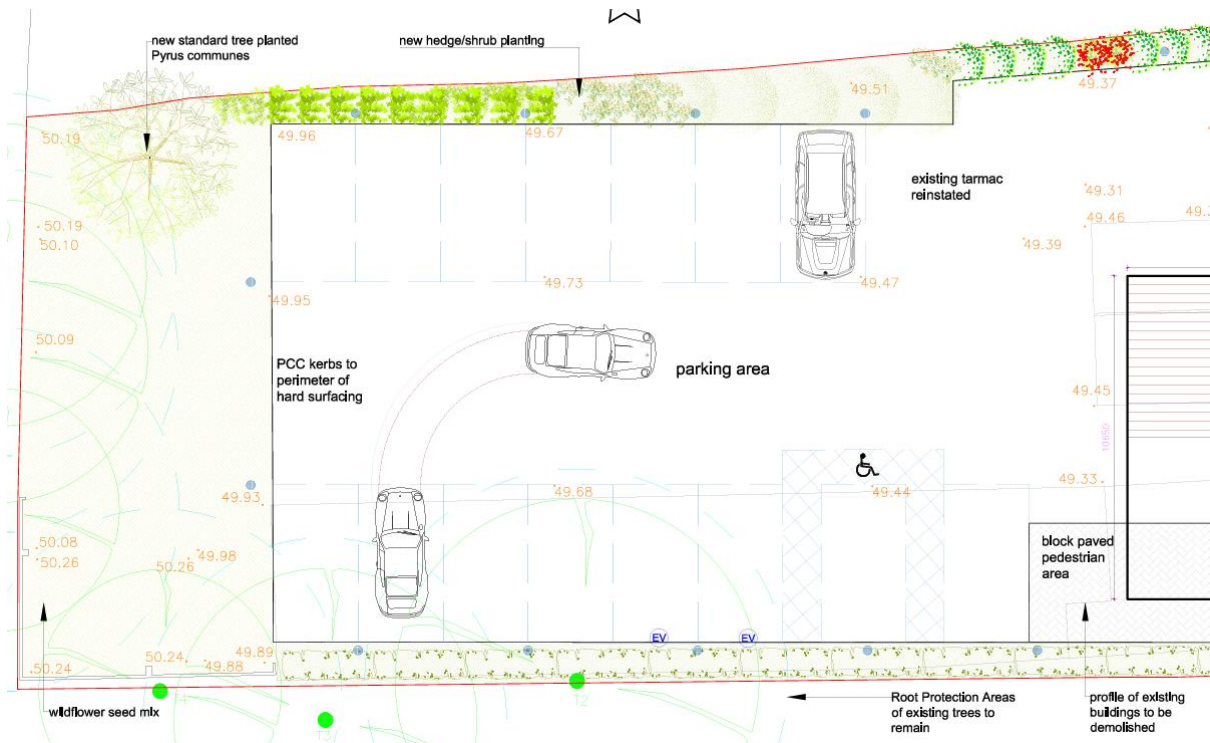
- 6.19 All existing boundary planting is retained but the scheme will bring about a major landscape improvement with new grass area to replace concrete, new tree, new hedges and a frontage hedge and planting bed. BNG is exempt but there is a major enhancement proposed.

Nuclear safety

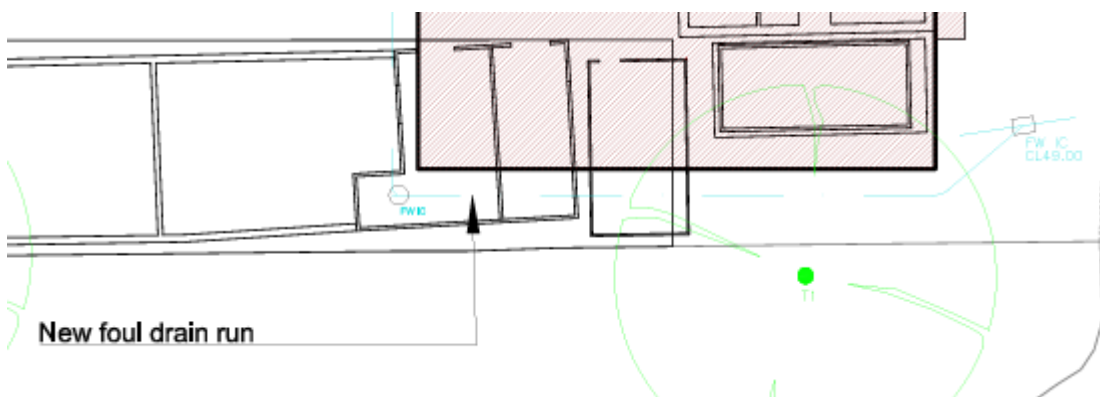
- 6.20 The site already has nuclear evacuation and management plans in place, so these will be continued for the new hall.

Drainage.

- 6.21 Surface water run off from the car park can be directed to the new permeable grass area.



- 6.22 The site is already served with a foul sewer connection. This will be linked to the new toilets in the building.



7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The key planning principles set out in this report would lead to a conclusion for support for a new meeting room building. Key factors are: -

1. It is use of an existing Previously Developed site.
2. It is within an existing settlement boundary.
3. It delivers parking on site.
4. Access is already in place.
5. The church use is already approved.
6. The design of the building reflects the previous bungalow and is a better design.
7. The street frontage is improved with a new hedging.
8. The rear hardstanding is reduced and increased landscaped introduced.
9. A new foul connection extension is introduced.
10. It meets the needs of local households in the area as a community use. F.1f
11. It does not increase activity at the site in relation to the nuclear consultation zone, it serves existing local resident households in already in the area, it does not contribute to growth and evacuation and management plans are already in place for the site.

7.2 As a local sustainable community facility there are no reasons why a new hall building and improvements to the overall site should not be forthcoming and there are no policy conflicts.