

EMMANUEL CHURCH CENTRE, SOUTH LAKE CRESCENT, WOODLEY, RG5 3QW

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EMMANUEL CHURCH CENTRE

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by JMS Planning on behalf of the Emmanuel Church Centre in support of a planning application for the *'Replacement of two existing portacabins for a single portacabin for charity use, alterations to car parking and landscaping and other associated works'* at Emmanuel Church Centre, South Lake Crescent, Woodley, RG5 3QW.

This application seeks to rationalise the space available for three charities currently operating on the site—namely, Lunch Bunch, Share, and Woodley Foodbank— so they can continue to sustainably serve the community from this location in the long term. Moreover, the Applicant seeks to regularise changes to the car parking layout and landscaping approved under planning application LPA ref: 191989.

Policy Guidance

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new requirement for developers to consult local communities before the submission of a planning application for certain developments in order to strengthen the role of local communities in planning.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies that early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties.

The NPPF further confirms that the level of engagement should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Amongst the people involved at pre-application stage, statutory and non-statutory consultees, local people and communities and elected members.

Pre-application engagement is considered to be a valuable way to improve understanding and consider any likely planning policy, design or other issues that may arise. The more issues that can be resolved at the pre-application stage, the more likely it is to result in an acceptable and good quality development. The document goes on to say that the scope and the extent of community involvement in any individual planning application will vary according to the significance and scale of the proposal.

The approach to pre-application consultation was guided by the policy set out within the Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF.

Pre-application Consultation

A pre-application enquiry was submitted to the Council on 18 September 2024 with LPA ref: 242382. The pre-application submission sought Wokingham Borough Council's views on a proposed amendment to the car parking and landscaping

approved under planning application LPA ref: 191989. It also sought advice regarding the replacement of two existing portacabins with a single portacabin for charity use, intended for temporary use for 5 to 7 years. Two layout options were submitted for review.

The pre-application response received on 21 October 2024 indicated that the principle of the proposed changes was acceptable, subject to the receipt of additional information regarding landscaping and parking. The Council found that the proposals would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area and the amenities of surrounding residential dwellings, and that the scheme is in accordance with national and local policy

Following pre-application discussions with the Council, the scheme was updated to reflect the feedback received. The application proposal now includes a permanent portacabin, a change from the initial proposal for a 5- to 7-year temporary use. The Applicant has selected a parking layout that balances parking needs with the protection of existing trees by avoiding unnecessary groundwork. This option results in four fewer parking spaces compared to the previously approved plan (LPA ref: 191989), but retains 52 square meters of existing green space, proposed for enhancement with additional planting to support local wildlife. Given budgetary constraints, this approach represents the most suitable overall solution.

Conclusions

This SCI has been prepared on behalf of Emmanuel Church Centre. It details the scope and methods used for pre-application consultation and engagement with stakeholders regarding the proposed development at Emmanuel Church Centre, South Lake Crescent, Woodley, RG5 3QW.

The consultation strategy involved liaison with relevant stakeholders and the Council. Overall, the feedback received was positive, although several specific matters were raised. The project team has addressed these matters wherever possible.

This SCI demonstrates the Applicant's commitment to providing the local authority and relevant stakeholders with an opportunity to engage with the proposals for the application site. It also confirms how the findings of the SCI have influenced the application scheme.

The Applicant has considered and responded to the feedback received, ensuring that issues and concerns raised during the pre-application stage and stakeholder consultation have been addressed in the planning application. The Applicant will maintain open communication with the local community as the proposals for the site progress.