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## APPLICATION DETAILS

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<b>Application No:</b>	24/0190/MAJ
<b>Location:</b>	Land off Stokesley Road, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough
<b>Proposal:</b>	Construction of gospel hall with associated car parking and landscaping.
<b>Applicant:</b>	Thornfield Gospel Hall Trust
<b>Agent:</b>	Steve Barker, Prism Planning Ltd Prism Planning Ltd
<b>Ward:</b>	Nunthorpe
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Refuse

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## SUMMARY

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Planning permission is sought for the construction of a gospel hall with associated car parking area and landscaping on land at the southern end of the allocated Nunthorpe Grange housing site.

Following a consultation exercise, objections and other representations were received from 120 different addresses, as well as the Nunthorpe Parish Council and a ward councillor.

The application site forms part of the wider Nunthorpe Grange site allocation where local Policies collectively allocate the site for residential development. The proposed development would, therefore, be a departure from the adopted Development Plan, although a place of worship could be considered a compatible use within the allocation.

Notwithstanding the potential acceptance of the use, the proposal is considered not to provide a high quality development, primarily as a result of the poor design of the gospel hall building and the sprawling car park layout. These issues with the layout and design are considered to result in a development that will detract from the visual amenity of the area and be unsympathetic to the local character of the surrounding area and would subsequently fall short of the policy based requirements for design and layout to be appropriate for the area.

The development is considered to be in conflict with local plan policies and Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework and it is the officer recommendation to refuse.

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## SITE AND SURROUNDINGS AND PROPOSED WORKS

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The application refers to a plot of land approximately two hectares in size located within the suburb of Nunthorpe in south Middlesbrough. More specifically, the proposals sought through this application would be sited in the southeast corner of Nunthorpe Grange, immediately north of Poole Roundabout.

The site is bounded to the north by greenfield land, which has seen recent development through a new medical centre and is allocated for future residential development in the Local Plan. Beyond the open fields to the north are residential properties and sports grounds as part of Nunthorpe and Marton Recreation Club. To the east of the site is further greenfield land and the A1043 (Nunthorpe Bypass). To the south is Poole Roundabout. To the west is Stokesley Road and beyond this are residential dwellinghouses as part of the Grey Towers Drive housing estate.

The application seeks planning permission for the construction of a purpose-built gospel hall (F1 use class) with associated car parking and landscaping. Access to the site would be formed off the private access road to the nearby medical centre.

The hall building would be positioned to the north of the application site, having a northwest-southeast orientation with the main entrance on the southeast elevation. The footprint of the building would be 1448 square metres – approximately 51 metres in length and 28 metres in width (this would increase to approximately 56 metres and 32 metres respectively when accounting for the roof overhang). The main roof design would feature a dual-pitched gable, which has a total height of approximately 9 metres, whilst a flat roof canopy runs around the southwest and southeast elevations at an approximate height of 2.5 metres.

The external elevations would comprise red brickwork at a lower level with charcoal grey colour timber cladding over. The roof would include terracotta colour pantiles. On the northwest elevation, a close boarded timber fence encloses the service yard. Three air conditioning units are positioned approximately midway along the northwest elevation. Given the internal arrangements and functionality of the building, there would be no glazing on the four elevations, except for that within the main entrance. Immediately adjacent to the main entrance is a plaza area.

Surrounding the building would be the associated car park, which accommodates 163 permanent spaces and 121 temporary spaces on Grasscrete. In total, 284 spaces could be provided, with 102 of these double-parked when the car park is full. The parking area materials would consist of porous blocks and tarmac. The car park would be restricted to users of the gospel hall with the exception of 12 spaces near to the point of access which would remain available for use by the local community.

On the perimeter of the site would be new planting, including trees and hedging, as well as a detention pond on the western boundary to allow connection to the main sewer system and to provide increased biodiversity at the site.

Documents that have been submitted in support of the application include:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Transport Statement and Travel Plan
- Aimsun Modelling Report
- Car Park Plan (car park entry and exit management)

- Biodiversity Net Gain Statement
- Biodiversity Metric Calculation
- Stage 1 Geo-Environmental Desk Study Report
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Drainage Strategy

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## PLANNING HISTORY

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There is no relevant planning history relating to this site, which has previously been in agricultural use.

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## PLANNING POLICY

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In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Planning Authorities must determine applications for planning permission in accordance with the Development Plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 143 of the Localism Act requires the Local Planning Authority to take local finance considerations into account. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires Local Planning Authorities, in dealing with an application for planning permission, to have regard to:

- The provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application
- Any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and
- Any other material considerations.

### Middlesbrough Local Plan

The following documents comprise the *Middlesbrough Local Plan*, which is the Development Plan for Middlesbrough:

- Housing Local Plan (2014)
- Core Strategy DPD (2008, policies which have not been superseded/deleted only)
- Regeneration DPD (2009, policies which have not been superseded/deleted only)
- Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPD (2011)
- Tees Valley Joint Minerals and Waste Policies & Sites DPD (2011)
- Middlesbrough Local Plan (1999, Saved Policies only) and
- Marton West Neighbourhood Plan (2016, applicable in Marton West Ward only).
- Stainton and Thornton Neighbourhood Plan (2022)

### National Planning Policy Framework

National planning guidance, which is a material planning consideration, is largely detailed within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). The NPPF defines the

role of planning in achieving economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development although recognises that they are not criteria against which every application can or should be judged and highlights the need for local circumstances to be taken into account to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

For decision making, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, working pro-actively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and that at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development (paragraph 38). The NPPF gives further overarching guidance in relation to:

- The delivery of housing,
- Supporting economic growth,
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres,
- Promoting healthy and safe communities,
- Promoting sustainable transport,
- Supporting the expansion of electronic communications networks,
- Making effective use of land,
- Achieving well designed buildings and places,
- Protecting the essential characteristics of Green Belt land
- Dealing with climate change and flooding, and supporting the transition to a low carbon future,
- Conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and
- Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals.

The planning policies and key areas of guidance that are relevant to the consideration of the application are:

Housing Local Plan (2014)

- H1 – Spatial Strategy
- H10 – Nunthorpe
- H11 – Housing Strategy
- H29 – Land at Nunthorpe, South of Guisborough Road
- H31 – Housing Allocations
- CS17 – Transport Strategy

Tees Valley Joint Minerals & Waste DPDs (2011)

- MWC4 – Safeguarding of Minerals Resources from Sterilisation
- MWP1 – Waste Audits

Core Strategy DPD (2008)

- CS4 – Sustainable Development
- CS5 – Design
- CS6 – Developer Contributions
- CS18 – Demand Management
- CS19 – Road Safety
- DC1 – General Development

Saved Local Plan Policies (1999)

## E49 – Development Along Main Approach Routes

### Supplementary Planning Documents

Middlesbrough's Urban Design SPD (2013)

Nunthorpe Design Statement SPD (2011)

### Other Relevant Policy Documents

Nunthorpe Grange Design Code (2018)

Tees Valley Design Guide and Specification: Residential and Industrial Estates Development

The detailed policy context and guidance for each policy is viewable within the relevant Local Plan documents, which can be accessed at the following web address.

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/planning-and-housing/planning/planning-policy>

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## CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

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### Neighbour Consultation

Consultation letters were posted out to local residents, a press notice was issued and, given the wider implications of the proposals, six site notices posted around the site and nearby area. At the time of writing, the following representations had been received from the below properties, and their comments are subsequently summarised.

#### Public Responses

Number of original neighbour consultations	205
Total numbers of comments received	121
Total number of <b>objections</b>	120
Total number of <b>support</b>	1

#### *Late letters of support*

It is noted that the application has recently received a significant number of letters in support of the proposed development. At the time of writing, however, it has not been possible to list the addresses of all those in support and to summarise their comments as they were received too close to the deadline for finalising this Committee Report. They will be summarised in a subsequent addendum report, which Members will be given.

#### Summary of letter of **support**:

- As a member of the PBCC residing in Guisborough, I am deeply invested in the spiritual and communal life of our church and would like to express the importance of this new development for my family.
- Our faith and way of life centre around regular gatherings, not just for worship, but also for communal activities that strengthen our bonds with one another and with the wider community.

- The current church at Gypsy Lane has become too small to accommodate our growing congregation, which draws other Plymouth Brethren members from across the North East.
- Nunthorpe offers a location that minimises journey times. Our way of life involves frequent gatherings that require a place that is easily accessible to all. Relocating to a site further away would impose significant travel burdens on many members, reducing the time we can spend in fellowship and in service to the community.
- The Brethren have a longstanding commitment to contributing positively to the communities in which we reside.
- Through initiatives such as the Rapid Relief Team (RRT), we regularly engage in charitable work, providing support and aid to those in need. In Nunthorpe, our members have been active in various forms of community service, and the new church in the area would further enable us to continue and expand this work.
- In conclusion, the proposed church in Nunthorpe is essential for meeting the spiritual needs of our growing congregation and will allow us to continue our tradition of contributing positively to the local area.

Letter of support received from:  
2 Sandwood Park, Guisborough

Summary of issues raised in **objections:**

- Is contrary to the plan for Nunthorpe Grange and restricts the construction of the required housing in the area.
- There are sequentially more preferable sites in Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley.
- The development would be better in a town centre next to major arterial link roads and public transport.
- The amount of traffic associated with the proposals will cause congestion, significant noise and impact on road safety.
- Pavements are not adequate in this area. There is no pedestrian crossing nor a pavement on this side of Stokesley Road and with the additional traffic, this is a hazard for pedestrians.
- The existing highway infrastructure cannot accommodate the proposals.
- Car park dominates the site.
- Development goes against the Council's green transport policies.
- No provision for cycle parking.
- Access to the site is very narrow and near a junction and on a blind corner which poses a safety hazard to all highway users.
- Excess parking would be in the surrounding housing estates.
- The design and scale of the proposals is not in keeping with the area and would negatively impact on the local character and amenity.
- This location is not suitable for a development of this scale.
- Building has a lack of windows and looks more like a warehouse in an industrial area.
- The Council should be insisting on solar panels.
- Concerns with the size of the building and fire regulations.
- Impacts on local wildlife.
- Nunthorpe needs its green spaces.
- Limited land in Nunthorpe and it should be used to serve the local area, which the proposed gospel hall will not.
- The proposals will not serve the local community.

- Concerns over the possible functions that may happen, which brings many vehicles and noise.
- Services will happen at times when local residents are trying to sleep.
- Significant loss of revenue from council tax that dwellings would provide.
- The development (tarmac car park) could have flooding impacts on the area.

Letters of objection received from:

Aldwalk Close – No. 1  
Ayton Meadows – No. 1  
Bedford Road – Nos. 20 and 24  
Boardstone – No. 28  
Borrowby Rise – No. 31  
Bromley Hill Close – Nos. 1 and 2  
Castle Wynd – No. 8  
Chandlers Ridge – Nos. 2 and 3  
Clevegate – Nos. 5 and 79  
Collingham Drive – Nos. 12 and 29  
Connaught Road – Nos. 2a and 20  
Cookgate – Nos. 12 and 76  
Cotscliffe Way – No. 8  
Crookers Hill Close – Nos. 1 and 17  
Ellerbeek – No. 9  
Fearnhead – No. 18  
Fencote Grange – No. 3  
Forest Drive, Ormesby – No. 13  
Glendue Close – No. 1  
Green Close – No. 10  
Green Way – No.22  
Grey Towers Drive – Nos. 8, 18, 24, 26, 28, 35, 41, 52, 58, 60 and 66  
Grey Towers Farm Cottages – Nos. 1, 3 and 4  
Guisborough Road – Nos. 53, 73, 109, 114a, 119 and 159  
Gypsy Lane – No. 62  
Hastings Close – No. 11  
High Gill Road – No. 19  
Innes Court – No. 5  
Lamonby Close – Nos. 6 and 18  
Low Gill View – No. 1  
Mallowdale – Nos. 1, 32 and 43  
Marton Moor Road – Nos. 25 and 33  
Matfen Avenue – No. 15  
Mayfield Road – No. 64  
Mickleby Close – No. 24  
Moor Green – Nos. 5 and 24  
Moor Park – No. 30  
Muirfield – Nos. 1 and 5  
Nunthorpe Gardens – Nos. 1, 15 and 27  
Railway Cottages – Treetops  
Ripon Road – No. 27  
Rookwood Road – Nos. 2 and 18  
Rosedale Road – No. 61

Rounton Grange – No. 11  
Runnymede – No. 12  
Ryehill Close – No. 2  
Selby Road – No. 15  
Sessay Grange – No. 3  
Shandon Park – No. 29  
Silverdale – No. 3  
Stokesley Road – Nos. 3, 7, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 22  
Sudbury – No. 15  
The Avenue, Nunthorpe – Nos. 12, 89 and 125  
The Crescent, Nunthorpe – No. 2b  
The Paddock – No. 1  
The Resolution – Nos. 1 and 3  
The Woodlands – No. 1  
Thurlestone – No. 25  
Tirril Way – No. 5  
Watchgate – No. 1  
Westside, Old Nunthorpe Village – No. 14  
Westwood Avenue – No. 5  
Wildon Grange – No. 9  
Windsor Crescent – No. 41  
Wyke Lane – Nos. 2 and 9  
York Road – No. 1

Local Ward Councillor Mieka Smiles made the following comments:

- Objects to this planning proposal in its current state.
- I am not totally opposed to a religious group having a new place of worship in this location as the group's current church is in the centre of a residential area and creates traffic and parking issues.
- This structure is far too large and not at all in keeping with the wider area. The hall in its current guise looks like a warehouse which is more suited to an industrial estate rather than an attractive residential area.
- The structure does not have windows. I think this is dangerous and I would question the legality of this for a building that's set to hold so many people.
- The expectation of up to 800 attendees far exceeds that of a small community church. The traffic this brings is too much for the road that already struggles with speeding vehicles - so much so that interventions such as electronic speeding signs have had to be introduced. Overflow onto the Marton Crawl should be a consideration. Parking could spill over onto Stokesley Road as this gospel hall hopes to be a regional hub.
- I would like to see any structure of this scale welcome in members of the wider Nunthorpe community.
- I would like to see local firms benefit from any new structure of this kind. Any planning permission should make sure that this is a condition.
- Flooding is a known issue in this area.

Nunthorpe Parish Council submitted the following objection:

- *Traffic, Travel, Highway and Pedestrian Safety*
- The Nunthorpe infrastructure is unable to accommodate such a development.
- The increase in pollution from noise and vehicle emissions will impact on residents.



- The addition of large numbers of vehicles entering and exiting the site will increase the danger of the crossing significantly.
- *Size, Scale, Layout and Appearance of the Development*
- The design, proposed materials and overall appearance of the development is not in keeping or sympathetic with the local surrounding area.
- The design is inappropriate of this green space which borders a conservation area.
- The green metal weld mesh fencing will be overbearing on the area.
- The scale, design and appearance of the proposed car parking has a negative impact on the streetscene and overall appearance of the site and surrounding area.
- The overall design does not appear to be of a high quality. Instead, it will be incongruous and obtrusive and gives the impression of an industrial style site.
- *Nature Conservation and the Environment*
- The development could result in cumulative negative effect on the environment and nearby properties.
- Loss of wildlife and a wildlife corridor.
- Reduced drainage exacerbating the flooding of gardens already experienced by properties along Stokesley Road.
- Increased noise and air pollution.
- Little benefit to the majority of Nunthorpe residents.
- Nunthorpe Grange Masterplan identifies this area allocated for residential development.

### **Responses from Internal Technical Consultees:**

#### **MBC Planning Policy**

The proposed use of the site as a place of worship would be a departure from Policy H29, which allocates the land for housing. Whilst the provisions of Draft Local Plan Policy HO4d would establish the principle of providing a place of worship on the site, limited weight can be attached to this as the document is at an early stage in its preparation.

While the material palette of the Gospel Hall seeks to reflect the local context, the overall form and detailing of the building is considered to create a design that is not in keeping with or sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policies CS4, CS5, and DC1 and the guidance set out in Middlesbrough's Urban Design Guide SPD and the Nunthorpe Design Statement SPD.

The Gospel Hall has a substantial seating capacity, with a considerable amount of associated car parking provision to accommodate this. The proposed use of the site and the impact it would have on the strategic transport network, the capacity of the road network, road safety, and the amenity of the surrounding environment will need to be considered.

The extent to which the proposal contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development principles should also be considered, including the promotion of sustainable modes of transport. Subsequently, the developments adherence to the provisions of Policies H29, CS6, CS17, CS18, CS19 and DC1, as well as guidance set out in the Tees Valley Design Guide and Specification and Nunthorpe Grange Design Code, is of relevance in the determination of the application.

Finally, the provisions of Policies H29, CS4, and CS5, and the guidance set out in the Nunthorpe Design Statement SPD and Nunthorpe Grange Design Code, should be considered with respect to the proposed landscaping of the site.

#### MBC Highways

The proposed building accommodates up to 984 people. A number of services occur with the largest events being Interchange Meetings that occur every third Sunday and which currently attract 800 worshippers.

#### *Site Access*

Access is proposed from Stokesley Road, with a new junction being formed off the access road serving the adjacent Nunthorpe Medical Centre. A new footway is proposed to the south side of the access road linking the development site to Stokesley Road.

#### *Assessment of Development*

The proposals have been assessed using agreed input parameters within the Strategic Aimsun Model. Vehicle trip generation estimates are based upon an average car occupancy of 3.4 people per car, based upon information supplied by the applicant as determined by the patterns observed at an existing gospel hall site.

Additional information supplied indicates that the development has very short arrival and departure periods – people arrive within a short window before and leave immediately after a service (within 30 minutes). Within the 30-minute arrival window, there is a peak where around 70% of total arrivals do so within a 10-minute window, which results in significant vehicular movements occurring over a very short timeframe on a localised part of the network.

In order to understand the potential implications of the development, the Aimsun Model tested two of the main events in a future year scenario (2030) to understand the impact of any delays in vehicles entering/exiting the site on the adjacent network given the intense nature in which traffic arrives and departs the site. These tests took into account varying degrees of delay when vehicles enter the site.

*City Meetings* are the most frequent services and occur 3 times per week. It is advised that 220 people attend these and based upon the above car occupancy rates would generate 65 vehicle arrivals and 65 departures. Aimsun Modelling demonstrates that meetings of this scale result in small changes in delay and queuing over that which would be seen in the future year without the development in place. As such, it is confirmed that this scale of development would not have a material impact on the operation of the network in terms of capacity, delay or queuing.

*Interchange Meetings* are capacity events which occur every third Sunday. It is advised that 800 people attend these and based upon the above car occupancy rates would generate 235 vehicle arrivals and 235 departures. In summary, the Modelling demonstrates that meetings of this scale result in more significant changes in journey time and queuing over that which would be seen in the future year without the development in place. Furthermore, the scale of the impact on the highway created as a result of these events is much more sensitive to the size of the potential delay incurred by vehicles accessing the site. In addition to increased journey times and delay this manifests itself as increased localised queuing.

To address concerns over the intensity of use of the site, a car parking management strategy has been submitted to support the application. This management strategy involves the use of ten wardens to direct arriving vehicles in order to fill the car park efficiently. A similar plan is proposed to ensure that the car park empties in a similar manner.

The Modelling demonstrates that the impact on the adjacent highway is critically dependent on the implementation and ongoing use of access and parking management. The Modelling also shows that a delay as small as 1 second per vehicle results in a much greater impact on the adjacent highway. Should there be any slight change to access and operation of the car park resulting in each vehicle only being delayed by 1 second, there is a disproportionate impact on the adjacent network. Such an approach requires a very high level of ongoing control with very small margins for error.

Whilst the applicant advises the larger capacity Interchange Meetings only occur once every third Sunday, it is not possible to control this in Planning terms. In addition, just because an event occurs infrequently, does not diminish the potential harm created by its operation. Conditions seeking to limit the use of a development for larger events would be highly restrictive and it is considered unlikely that such an approach would be reasonable or enforceable. The car parking management plan could be conditioned, although such management requires an extremely high level of control. Should this fail or there are external influences outside of the control of the applicant then the impact on the adjacent highway would be significant with no mitigation available. This could be considered contrary to Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that development should be refused where there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Officers therefore have significant concerns regarding the proposals. The impact that can be seen on the highway network is critically dependent on the frequency of use of the building for the larger/capacity events and the ongoing successful implementation of a car parking management plan. However, this has to be weighed up against the information supplied by the applicant and detail on the way in which the site is intended to operate.

Making a recommendation from a Highways perspective is based upon various pieces of evidence and assessing whether a scheme could be made acceptable, which on this scheme is finely balanced with pros and cons. Whilst the Modelling establishes that there is potential for harm, consideration must be given to whether the impacts could be mitigated against and whether it would be appropriate to mitigate.

It is the view of officers that the impacts could not be mitigated against. Due to the layout of the highway, it is considered that the effects of additional queuing or journey time delay could not be mitigated against. Increasing the number of approach arms or width of approach to existing junctions either cannot be achieved within the available land or the cost of such works would be disproportionate to the scale of development. Increasing vehicular capacity at junctions would also not address issues created by lengthy queuing, which occurs due to vehicles having to give way to other flows at junctions.

In terms of whether it would be appropriate to mitigate against the impacts, the frequency of the events of harm are based upon capacity events. Notwithstanding concerns over how the number of events could be controlled, the harm is only seen for a short peak (circa 10-15 minutes) within a 30-minute period before and after a service.

### *Car Parking*

Development proposals indicate that a total of 284 car spaces are proposed. A typical Interchange Meeting currently attracts 800 worshippers and based upon the car occupancy levels, the parking demand from these meetings would be 235 vehicles. Should the building be operated to its full capacity, the parking demand would be 289 spaces.

The level of car parking being proposed is significantly higher than the Tees Valley Highway Design standards, which would advocate 164 spaces if the building were operating to its full capacity. Whilst each development is taken on its own merits generally where parking levels exceed the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide an objection is raised. This approach is taken as the availability of car parking is an established demand management tool which when utilised with other measures seeks to promote sustainable travel and reduce dependence on the private car. An overprovision of car parking can lead to car dependence and associated issues arising from such an approach. The main difference with the scheme in question, however, is that the high levels of car parking are a function of the significant capacity of the building. The applicant has indicated that they have an average number of occupants per vehicle of 3.4 which is very high and unlikely to be able to be improved.

### *Active Travel*

Generally, churches and places of worship are facilities which serve the local community and the tendency for people to walk would be high. In this case, however, the development has a much wider catchment area and travel by foot or bicycle becomes less viable. Supporting documents advise that members of the church do not cycle as they would be dressed in unsuitable clothing (suits, dresses etc). The times of services fall outside the operation of frequent public transport and, when factoring in the catchment area of worshippers, public transport becomes a much less viable solution. The applicant has therefore not proposed any off-site highway mitigation towards Active Travel and their position is that the primary form of travel to the development will be by car.

Notwithstanding the above, a Travel Plan has been submitted, although it is the officer view that this document is a token gesture and it is highly unlikely that the current travel patterns will change owing to the approach taken to the development. It is noted that such a form of development with an almost exclusive car-based approach is contrary to local and national policies regards sustainable transport.

Given the above assessment, the recommendation is very finely balanced between supporting and objecting to the proposals and there are a number of concerns and issues raised. When assessing each of these issues and concerns individually and whether they could be suitably addressed, it is the opinion of the Local Highway Authority that the development could just be considered acceptable subject to a number of elements being conditioned to secure ongoing control.

### MBC Environmental Health

The ARP Geo-technical Ltd Phase 1 has been reviewed and the conclusions are agreed with that a site investigation would be required. In the event of approval, a condition is recommended.

The noise assessment has been reviewed – as well as the additional information from the agent regarding when the facility would be used in the early morning – and it is the impacts of the use during the early hours that would be the main concern. The use early morning will

be each Sunday where it is understood there will be around 12 cars and 40 people attending. The predicted noise levels within the noise assessment were considered with the car park full, so the noise predictions are more than the anticipated noise levels, as the number of cars arriving early Sunday morning has been significantly overestimated in the noise assessment.

Whilst the predicted noise levels will be in excess of the existing background noise levels from 6am – 7am (classed as night time), the actual noise level and predicted internal noise levels from this all meet the BS8233 criteria, including night time noise levels measured as Leq and Lmax levels. As local residents are expected to be within their homes between 6am and 7am, the assessment of noise using internal noise levels and BS8233 guideline levels is acceptable.

In addition, there will be no amplification of music or voices from the church. Overall, there are no objections in terms of noise impact.

In relation to lighting, if external lighting within the building grounds and/or car park grounds are proposed, a condition is recommended for details of the lighting prior to installation.

MBC Flooding Officer

No objections subject to conditions for drainage information.

MBC Waste Policy

No objections.

MBC Valuation and Estates

No comments received.

**Responses from External/Statutory Consultees**

Secured By Design

Recommends that the applicant actively seeks Secured by Design accreditation.

Natural England

No comments received.

Cleveland Fire Brigade

No objections.

Northern Gas Networks

Objects to the application on the grounds that the protection given to NGN plant may be diminished by the works proposed.

Northumbrian Water

No comments received.

Environment Agency

No comments received.

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council  
No objections.

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## PLANNING CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT

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1. During the application process, revised drawings were submitted seeking to address concerns that officers raised over the design of the proposals. Amongst the principal changes were the introduction of pantile roof tiles within a new dual pitched gabled roof design as well as different colour timber cladding in the elevations. The revised drawings form the current set of plans upon which the following analysis is based.

### Principle of Development

2. The application site is located in south Middlesbrough and relates to an area of land identified as part of the wider 'Land at Nunthorpe, south of Guisborough Road' housing allocation. Policies H1, H10, H11, H29 and H31 collectively allocate the site for residential development and are relevant to this application. As the proposed development regards the construction of a place of worship, it is considered to represent a departure from the adopted Development Plan.

3. The application site forms part of the 'Nunthorpe Grange' housing allocation, which is identified in Policies HO4 and HO4d of the Council's Draft Local Plan (January 2024). These draft policies – as well as established Policy H31 in the Local Plan – indicate that the site could accommodate approximately 250 dwellings. In addition, part g of Policy HO4d states that the site should '*provide a community hub and community garden, community hall or places of worship*'. Although this proposal would establish the principle of providing a place of worship at the site, it is considered that limited weight should be attached to the policies within the Draft Local Plan as the document is at an early stage in its preparation. As it advances further through the preparation process, more weight may be attached to the policies it contains.

4. Amongst other things, Policy H29 advises that the site will not be brought forward until an agreement on provision of a park and ride facility has been secured or the Longlands Road to Ladgate Lane Road have been secured and a timetable for implementation agreed. It is noted that neither of these transport infrastructure schemes has been agreed. A doctors' surgery has been granted planning permission and constructed within the allocation site in advance of an agreement on the schemes, which could be considered to establish a precedent. Provided that the impact of the proposed development on the highway network can be satisfactorily mitigated by other measures, this would be a material planning consideration which could justify approval of a development proposal in the absence of any agreement on the above two infrastructure schemes.

5. Policy CS4 requires all development to contribute towards the achievement of a range of sustainable development principles, where appropriate. Consideration should therefore be given to the provisions of Policy CS4, which include: respecting the diverse needs of communities and ensuring that everyone has access to the community facilities they need in their daily lives; ensuring that biodiversity and other natural assets and green infrastructure are protected and, where possible, enhanced; and incorporating within

developments of a floorspace of 1,000 square metres or more, onsite renewable energy facilities or energy saving technologies (for example combined heat and power systems, photovoltaic cells and wind turbines) that provide as a minimum 10% of energy requirements. In the event of approval, a condition can be imposed to provide 10% renewables or a fabric first approach.

6. Whilst a place of worship is strictly a departure from the residential development anticipated for this part of the site as per the Nunthorpe Grange masterplan, it could be deemed a compatible use within the allocation.

#### Highways Implications

7. Policies CS17, CS19 and DC1 require that development proposals do not have a detrimental impact upon the operation of the strategic transport network, road safety and the capacity of the road network. Policy H29 requires the provision of any necessary off-site improvements to transport infrastructure to ensure traffic generated by the development does not have a significant detrimental impact upon the highway network.

8. Similarly, and where necessary, Policy CS6 requires a contribution towards providing infrastructure – that is directly related to the proposed development – to make a scheme acceptable in Planning terms. The Nunthorpe Grange Design Code identifies that £159,295 per net developable hectare will be required for local strategic road improvements. Although this requirement was based on the site being developed for housing, consideration needs to be given to the level of off-site improvements required to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the road network. Having considered the supporting Transport Assessment and Aimsun Modelling, no contribution is deemed necessary in this case.

9. The application specifies the proposed patterns of use for the gospel hall as ranging from smaller meetings of around 40 people (approximately 12 cars), to larger meetings of around 800 people (approximately 240 cars) that occur less frequently every third Sunday. The building, however, is stated in the submitted Planning Statement as having a maximum seating capacity of 982 and has parking to accommodate a total of 284 cars. The intensity of the proposed use and the potential impact that it may have upon both the strategic transport network and the capacity of the road network needs careful consideration, as well as any implications that it may have on road safety.

#### *Site Access*

10. Access is proposed from Stokesley Road, with a new junction being formed off the access road serving the adjacent Nunthorpe Medical Centre. A new footway is proposed to the south side of the access road linking the development site to Stokesley Road.

#### *Assessment of Development*

11. The proposals have been assessed using agreed input parameters within the Strategic Aimsun Model. Vehicle trip generation estimates are based upon an average car occupancy of 3.4 people per car, based upon information supplied by the applicant as determined by the patterns observed at an existing gospel hall site.

12. Additional information supplied by the applicant indicates that the proposed development has very short arrival and departure periods – people arrive within a short window before and leave immediately after a service (within 30 minutes). Within the 30-minute arrival window, there is a peak where around 70% of total arrivals do so within a 10-

minute window. The result of this is that there are significant vehicular movements occurring over a very short timeframe on a localised part of the network.

13. In order to understand the potential implications of the development, the Aimsun Model tested two of the main events in a future year scenario (2030) with further sensitivity testing to understand the impact of any delays in vehicles entering/exiting the site on the adjacent network given the intense nature in which traffic arrives and departs the site. These sensitivity tests have been undertaken on the following basis.

- Test 1: vehicles incur no delay on access.
- Test 2: vehicles incur 1 second of delay per vehicle on access.
- Test 3: vehicles incur 2 second of delay per vehicle on access.

14. *City Meetings* are the most frequent services and occur 3 times per week. It is advised that 220 people attend these and based upon car occupancy rates (3.4 people per vehicle) would generate 65 vehicle arrivals and 65 vehicle departures. Aimsun modelling demonstrates that meetings of this scale result in small changes in delay and queuing over that which would be seen in the future year without the development in place. As such, it is confirmed that this scale of development would not have a material impact on the operation of the network in terms of capacity, delay or queuing.

15. *Interchange Meetings* are capacity events which are stated as occurring every third Sunday. It is advised that 800 people attend these and based upon car occupancy rates (3.4 people per vehicle) would generate 235 vehicle arrivals and 235 vehicle departures. In summary, the modelling demonstrates that meetings of this scale result in more significant changes in journey time and queuing over that which would be seen in the future year without the development in place. Furthermore, the scale of the impact on the highway created as a result of these events is much more sensitive to the size of the potential delay incurred by vehicles accessing the site.

- Test 1: Journey time increases on the network immediately surrounding the site of between +01:22 (+56.7%) and +03:16 (+101.3%) over that seen in the no development scenario.
- Test 2: Journey time increases on the network immediately surrounding the site of between +01:27 (+60.2%) and +03:35 (+115.6%) over that seen in the no development scenario.
- Test 3: Journey time increases on the network immediately surrounding the site of between +01:56 (+80.4%) and +05:45 (+178.1%) over that seen in the no development scenario.

16. In addition to increased journey times and delay this manifests itself as increased localised queuing.



Junction	Arm	No Development Mean Queue	With Development Mean Queue	Summary
<b>Poole Roundabout</b>				
	Stokesley Road	1 vehicle	8 vehicles	This increase is solely attributed to additional development trips using this arm of the junction when departing. On most occasions, any queuing is contained within the Stokesley Road approach to Poole Roundabout however in some instances queues extend as far as the site access junction and thus prevent vehicles exiting the site for a short period of time.
	Nunthorpe Bypass (A1043)	4 vehicles	25 vehicles	This increase is attributed to vehicles approaching the Poole Roundabout from the Nunthorpe Bypass having to give way to an increased number of vehicles entering the roundabout from Stokesley Road. This increase is associated with development trips departing the site and turning left out of the site onto Stokesley Road. Given the greater volumes of traffic using the Nunthorpe Bypass, the level of queuing remains reasonably consistent after 13:00 and does not drop as quick as predicted on other arms.
	A172 (South)	1 vehicle	21 vehicles	This increase in queueing is solely attributed to additional development trips using this arm of the junction on arrival.
	Cotcliffe Way	2 vehicles	2 vehicles	Mean queues on Cotcliffe Way change only very subtly with the development in place
	Dixons Bank (A172)			This increase in queueing is due to a small number of additional development trips using this arm of the junction to access the site, as well as vehicles on this approach having to give-way to an increased number of trips entering the roundabout from the A172 South. IN addition, some partial blocking does occur, particularly in Test 3, with development trips queueing along Stokesley Road into the site access. This means that vehicles on the Dixons Bank approach queue onto Poole roundabout.
<b>Stokesley Road/Site Access</b>				
	Stokesley Road North	0 vehicles	2 vehicles	This change is associated with queuing further downstream on approach to the Poole roundabout. On some occasions, these queues extend as far back as the site access and due to the increased number of left turning development trips departing the site, this impacts upon vehicles travelling southbound on Stokesley Road.
	Site Access	0 vehicles	7 vehicles	This increase in queuing is attributed to development trips when departing the site. Generally, any queuing is contained on the site access arm but on some occasions, this does extend as far back as the Gospel Hall car park access and into the site.
	Stokesley Road South	0 vehicles	11 vehicles	This increase in queueing occurs as a result of right turning development trips giving way to southbound traffic on Stokesley Road and queuing on the site access arm into the Gospel Hall car park. Queuing on this arm of the junction is particularly sensitive to the level of delay assumed at the car park access, with the results showing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mean queues of up to 11 vehicles (approx. 64m) in Test 3. On some occasions, the extent of queueing is greater than this and extends as far back as Poole roundabout.</li> <li>• Mean queues of slightly less than 2 vehicles (approx. 12m) in Test 2.</li> <li>• No queueing in Test 1.</li> </ul>

17. In order to address concerns over the intensity of use of the site, a car parking management strategy has been submitted to support the application. This management strategy involves the use of wardens (10 indicated) to direct arriving vehicles in order to fill the car park in a set routine in order to ensure maximum efficiency. A similar plan is proposed to ensure that the car park empties in an efficient manner.

18. As has been demonstrated within the modelling, the impact on the adjacent highway is critically dependent on the implementation and ongoing use of access and parking management which are highly controlling and restrictive. As has also been demonstrated by the modelling, a delay as small as 1 second per vehicle results in a much greater impact on the adjacent highway. Should there be any slight change to access and operation of the car park resulting in each vehicle only being delayed by 1 second, there is a disproportionate impact on the adjacent network. Such an approach requires a very high level of ongoing control with very small margins for error.

19. A further consideration is that whilst the applicant advises the larger capacity Interchange Meetings only occur once every third Sunday, it is not possible to control this in planning terms. Consent is being sought for a place of worship that can accommodate up to 984 people with 284 car spaces. It is the implications of this scale of development which need to be understood and assessed with any mitigation required put in place. In addition, just because an event occurs infrequently, does not diminish the potential harm created by its operation.

20. Consideration is given to the use of conditions to meet the tests of the Circular 11/95 and whether they could make development acceptable in planning and highway terms. Conditions seeking to limit the use of a development for larger events to a certain number of times per week/month etc. would be highly restrictive and it is considered unlikely that such an approach would meet the tests of the Circular nor would any condition be likely to be enforceable in a practical sense. The car parking management plan could theoretically be conditioned, although as has been demonstrated within the Aimsun Model, such management requires an extremely high level of control for the life of the site. Should this fail or there are external influences outside of the control of the applicant then the impact on the adjacent highway would be significant to which no mitigation is available. This could be considered contrary to Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that development should be refused where there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

21. Officers therefore have significant concerns regarding the proposals. The impact that can be seen on the highway network is critically dependent on the frequency of use of the building for the larger/capacity events (the Interchange Meetings, in particular) and the ongoing successful implementation of a car parking management plan. However, this has to be weighed up against the information supplied by the applicant and detail on the way in which the site is intended to operate.

22. Making a recommendation from a Highways perspective is based upon various pieces of evidence and assessing whether a scheme could be made acceptable, which on this scheme is finely balanced with pros and cons. Whilst the modelling establishes that there is potential for harm, consideration must be given to whether the impacts could be mitigated against and whether it would be appropriate to mitigate.

23. It is the view of officers that the impacts could not be mitigated against. Due to the layout of the highway, it is considered that the effects of additional queuing or journey time delay could not be mitigated against. Increasing the number of approach arms or width of approach to existing junctions either cannot be achieved within the available land or the cost of such works would be disproportionate to the scale of development. Increasing vehicular capacity at junctions would also not address issues created by lengthy queuing, which occurs due to vehicles having to give way to other flows at junctions.

24. In terms of whether it would be appropriate to mitigate against the impacts, the frequency of the events of harm are based upon capacity events, events which it is understood occur once every third Sunday. Notwithstanding concerns over how the number of events could be controlled, the harm is only seen for a short peak (circa 10-15 minutes) within a 30-minute period before and after a service.

#### *Car Parking*

25. Development proposals indicate that a total of 284 car spaces are proposed consisting of 163 hard surfaced spaces plus 121 Grasscrete spaces. A typical Interchange Meeting currently attracts 800 worshippers and based upon the car occupancy levels provided (3.4 people per car), the parking demand from these meetings would be 235 vehicles. Should the building be operated to its full capacity of 984 worshippers, the parking demand would be 289 spaces.

26. The level of car parking being proposed is significantly higher than the Tees Valley Highway Design standards, which would advocate 164 spaces if the building were operating to its full capacity. Whilst each development is taken on its own merits – taking into account such considerations such as the location and land use – generally where parking levels exceed the Tees Valley Highway Design Guide an objection is raised. This approach is taken as the availability of car parking is an established demand management tool which when utilised with other measures seeks to promote sustainable travel and reduce dependence on the private car. An overprovision of car parking can lead to car dependence and associated issues arising from such an approach. The main difference with the scheme in question, however, is that the high levels of car parking are a function of the significant capacity of the building. The applicant has indicated that they have an average number of occupants per vehicle of 3.4 which is very high and unlikely to be able to be improved.

#### *Active Travel*

27. Generally, churches and places of worship are facilities which serve the local community and as such the propensity for people to walk would be high. In this case, however, the proposed development has a much wider catchment area and travel by foot or bicycle becomes less desirable or viable. Supporting documents (Transport Statement) advise that members of the church do not cycle due to worshippers being dressed in unsuitable clothing (suits, dresses etc). In addition, the applicant also advises that the times of services fall outside the periods of operation of frequent public transport and, when factoring in the catchment of worshippers' public transport, again, becomes a much less viable solution. On this basis, the applicant has not proposed any off-site highway mitigation towards Active Travel and their position is that the primary form of travel to the development will be by car.

28. Notwithstanding the above, a Travel Plan has been submitted, although it is the officer view that this document would have limited impact as it is highly unlikely that the travel patterns will be that of car borne visits, owing to the approach taken to the development and statements made by the applicant. It is noted that such a form of development with an almost exclusive car-based approach is contrary to local and national policies regards sustainable transport. It is noted however, that this is always likely to be the case for a use which attracts people from a dispersed wider area. However, such uses would ideally be located at a site where there are sustainable travel options. Arguably, it is in an unsustainable location for this use.

29. Whilst the comments of the Highways Officer are noted, there remains to be concern over the nature of traffic movements. Planning permission is being sought for a use and putting too much focus on a very specific way in which it would work is challenging unless it can be reasonably controlled by condition. It is considered that increased frequency of use, change in timing of meetings into the peak hours, removal of marshalling or low effectiveness of marshalling, will all be likely to result in notable levels of traffic backing up into the adjacent highway and this could be on a more regular basis than for a half hour (out of peak) period once every 3 weeks.

30. It is considered to be very difficult to control the individual movements of people and when talking about delays of a few seconds influencing traffic queues entering a site off a carriageway, this has significant potential to cause problems. Again, a notable or significant impact on the highway for 30 mins every 3 weeks outside of peak hours is one consideration but this is very different to a greater use infringing into peak hours and planning permission would be granted for the overall parking spaces and thereby would be significantly different. Conditions could be imposed to restrict numbers of cars, but that would not necessarily stop cars going to the site. Opening hours could be controlled, but this level of control would result in a large building and expansive car park being empty for the majority of the time.

31. In view of these matters, it is considered that the amount of car parking sought would result in adverse impacts on the movement of traffic on the adjacent highway and conditions to control this would not pass the tests of reasonableness as they would render the building largely unused. Whilst this may suit a very specific occupier, it is unlikely to suit the building or the use long term. The building is of a nature, as a single hall, that all users would always arrive over a very short period, rather than a building of multiple uses where the same overall level of use is spread over much longer times and this inherent design requirement is problematic when considering the movement of vehicles.

#### Flood Risk and Drainage Considerations

32. The application has been considered by the relevant water authorities, including Northumbrian Water and the Council's Local Flooding Officer. All have confirmed that there are no objections to the proposed development subject to it being carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy. More information would be required however, as there are some areas where information or clarification is required, although such information can be secured through appropriate conditions.

#### Ecology/Landscaping/BNG

33. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment, which provides general advice on the ecological constraints to the proposed development and what appropriate mitigation measures might be implemented to minimise adverse impacts on the flora and fauna at the site.

34. The application site primarily comprises agricultural field and has established hedgerows along much of the site boundaries. The proposals will involve the clearance of the existing grassland habitat to facilitate the development, although the agricultural grassland is assessed as being of no notable ecological value. The surrounding hedges and self-seeded trees within it, however, are considered to have ecological importance. The site has been assessed in relation to a number of different protected species including bats, nesting birds, badger, great crested newts and reptiles.

35. The report assesses that the site is not optimal for badgers but they may commute and forage on site, so basic mitigation measures are recommended to avoid any significant harm. The site provides no potential roosts for bats, as there are no buildings at the site and the trees and hedgerows are considered not to support roosting bats. The site may provide opportunities for foraging so basic mitigation measures could be introduced to avoid indirect impacts. The site is considered to have poor habitats for great crested newts and there are no records of them in the surrounding area, so there are unlikely to be significant impacts as a result of the development. The site is also considered to have no reptiles present given the sub-optimal habitats and the previous land use, so there impacts on reptiles are deemed

to be insignificant. The grassland habitats and hedgerows on site are considered to offer suitability for nesting birds, so in the event of approval, suitable mitigation and avoidance measures are recommended and can be conditioned. As well as the protected species, the site was considered suitable for hedgehogs, which could be impacted by any site clearance works and appropriate mitigation and site enhancement measures should be implemented in the event of approval. A condition can be imposed for appropriate enhancement features.

36. A detailed soft landscaping scheme has been submitted as part of the application, which shows the planting of 82 new trees (including Norway Maples, Alder, Silver Birch, Hornbeam, Hawthorn, Apple, Rowan and Oak) and ornamental shrub planting across the site. Wild flora would be planted within the linear park, which goes around the edge of the site, and a new wetland area created near to the southwest boundary (adjacent to the site entrance) that seeks to provide opportunities to increase biodiversity at the site. Along with the established hedgerows on the southwest and southeast boundaries, the proposed landscaping assists with screening the development from outside of the site.

37. Since April 2024, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has become a mandatory requirement under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. All relevant applications must deliver a BNG of 10% over 30 years, which means that development will result in a more or a better quality natural habitat than there was before development.

38. The application has been supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and the required Biodiversity Metric tool has been completed. The Biodiversity Net Gain Statement advises that the BNG mitigation hierarchy has been followed, which requires development to firstly avoid impacts, then to minimise impacts and then to compensate for impacts to on site habitats. The Metric concludes that area habitats will be improved by over 13% and that hedgerows will be improved by over 128%. A management and monitoring plan to ensure that the minimum requirement of 10% net gain in biodiversity is achieved over 30 years can be conditioned in the event of approval.

#### Building Impacts on Residential Amenity

39. Policy DC1 requires the impacts from all development proposals upon the surrounding environment and amenities of occupiers of nearby properties to be minimal. With many residential properties in the area, it is important that the potential impacts on nearby occupiers are acceptable.

40. The application has been supported by a noise assessment. This, as well as additional information provided by the agent of when the facility would be used, has been reviewed by officers in the Council's Environmental Health service. The impacts of the use of the proposal during the early hours would cause the main concerns.

41. The use of the site early morning will be every Sunday where it is understood there will be around 12 cars and 40 people attending. Reviewing the noise assessment, the predicted noise levels within the assessment were considered with the car park full and, therefore, the noise predictions are considerably in excess of the anticipated noise levels, as the number of cars arriving early Sunday morning has been significantly overestimated in the noise assessment. Whilst the predicted noise levels will be above the existing background noise levels between 6am and 7am (classed as night time), the predicted internal noise levels from the actual noise levels will comply with the BS8233 criteria. As local residents are reasonably expected to be within their homes between 6am – 7am each morning, the assessment of noise using internal noise levels and BS8233 guideline levels is acceptable.

42. It is understood that there will be no amplification of music or voices from the church. Overall, there are no objections in terms of noise impact from the proposals.

43. The proposed building would be situated over 100 metres from the nearest residential properties that are along Stokesley Road. At this distance, there are considered to be no adverse impacts in terms of overshadowing or oppression from the building. The proposed building would also be screened by the existing hedgerows that run along the boundary with Stokesley Road as well as the mature trees that are situated in many front gardens of properties along Stokesley Road. The proposals also detail a soft landscaping scheme, which will further considerably screen the building and the car parking area from the nearby properties.

44. Properties to the north of the site, situated at The Woodlands, are deemed not to be affected by the proposals due to a lack of proximity to the building (over 150 metres) and being separated from the development site by the existing doctors surgery and adjacent open field.

#### Design/Layout/Streetscene

45. Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that *'planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate landscaping; are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; and, establish a strong sense of place, using building types and materials to create attractive and distinctive places to visit'*.

46. Local Policies CS4, CS5 and DC1 collectively require all development proposals to demonstrate a high quality of design that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. This includes the layout, form, scale and materials of a proposed development. Middlesbrough's Urban Design Guide SPD provides further guidance on development design. It states that new development should look to strengthen and reinforce the locally distinctive identity, avoiding bland and contextless design that may lead to 'anywhere' developments, whilst avoiding pastiche.

47. The Nunthorpe Design Statement SPD (NDS) aims to maintain the distinctive character of Nunthorpe and provides guidance on the design of development in the area. Guideline D1 encourages high quality contemporary architecture that references locally distinctive detailing and responds to the context of its particular location. For development on the boundary/outside of urban Nunthorpe, Guideline D6 encourages development that is sympathetic with the surrounding landscape and buildings. It also states that adequate measures should be taken to screen ancillary features such as car parks.

48. Prior to the planning application being submitted, it is noted that a scheme was considered by the Local Planning Authority as part of its pre-application advice service, which included a meeting with representatives of the church and a detailed advice note being issued. In accordance with Paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the pre-application procedure sought to provide the applicant with relevant information of what the Council would expect to see as part of the formal planning application for a development on this site.

49. Policy H29 sets out criteria that development proposals at the 'Land at Nunthorpe, South of Guisborough Road' allocation are expected to satisfy. In terms of the design process, it states that the topography, features, and views of the site should be taken into account. The Nunthorpe Grange Design Code (NGDC) specifically identifies the location of the application site as forming a very important view from Poole Roundabout, as this will be the first view of the development for any cars approaching the site from the south or east. In addition, as the application site is visible from the A172, Policy E49 is relevant which states that particular regard will be paid to the quality of design and landscaping of proposals visible from the main approach routes to Middlesbrough.

50. The proposals have been arranged with the main gospel hall building at the northernmost point of the site. Whilst the principle of this arrangement might be considered acceptable, it is also considered to be a missed opportunity to construct a building of a higher quality and take advantage of this very prominent corner position to the north of Poole Roundabout. Being at the northernmost point of the site, however, means the building sits further from a key public vantage point and would be less imposing. These concerns were put forward to the development during the pre-application process and officers advised that the position of the building should be reviewed.

51. Notwithstanding the above, the main gospel hall is situated towards the northern end of the site and measures over 50 metres in total length and nearly 30 metres in width. The main roof design would have a dual-pitch and reaches approximately 9 metres in overall height. Given the considerable size of the building, it is particularly important that the design and materials used in its external finish are appropriate in order for the building scale and mass not to be visually harmful to the local area.

52. The materials to be used in the building are considered to be acceptable in principle, as the brickwork, composite timber cladding and double pantiles would all be deemed appropriate for a building of this type and are listed in the Nunthorpe Grange masterplan as being acceptable for use in building elevations. A condition can be attached to any planning permission requiring samples of materials prior to their use in construction. Such a condition is deemed particularly important for the proposed composite timber cladding, as the masterplan states the use of *imitation timber cladding may be acceptable depending on the quality*.

53. Whilst the materials may be acceptable, concerns are raised by officers over the design of the building, which is considered not to exhibit a high quality appearance. Concerns were initially raised at the pre-application stage that the proposed building had a utilitarian appearance and that the design needed to be reviewed in order to break up its elevations and soften its appearance. Despite the submission of a revised drawing showing an alternative roof design, these concerns are still raised.

54. It is understood that there is very little flexibility in terms of the floor plan due to the internal layout requirements, which has been designed in accordance with a very specific design code used by the gospel hall community worldwide. This set design for the floor plan, however, is considered to have negative implications on the external finished appearance. The main hall, which is referred to as an inverted dish, occupies the majority of the floorspace of the building and has four emergency exits on the side elevations but no windows. Toilets are provided either side of the foyer before entering the main hall, which similarly have no windows serving them. The absence of feature / detailing within the fenestration on the external elevations results in a finished appearance solely featuring

composite timber cladding above a lower brick wall. Such a material finish can provide a quality appearance, but on a building of this scale with no complementary glazing to break up the elevations, the overall appearance is deemed to be similar to an agricultural or industrial building, which would be unacceptable for this suburban verdant location and incongruous when adjacent to planned high quality residential development.

55. The majority of the site is taken up by the associated car park and internal road layout, which accounts for approximately 1 hectare of the overall site. During pre-application discussions with the developer, concerns were expressed over the size of the car park which was shown to accommodate 202 vehicles, as the location on the edge of town and close to the limits to development is considered an inappropriate environment for such a large car park. As part of the formal planning application the car park size increased to 284 spaces, although it is noted that attempts have been made to soften the appearance of part of the area of hardstanding through proposing grasscrete for 121 of the spaces.

56. As discussed in the Highways section of this report, it is understood that the car park will only be full as part of Interchange Meetings that occur every three weeks. Outside of these Interchange Meetings, the car park will be used as part of other services including City Meetings, which occur three times a week and would expect approximately 65-70 cars, occupying only a quarter of the car park. As such, a large proportion of the car park would be left unused for most of the time.

57. Whilst the existing hedgerows along Stokesley Road and the proposed soft landscaping – when mature – would provide adequate screening of the car parking area from some aspects, the overall size and design would not be considered in keeping with or sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area and coupled with the massing and design related issues of the proposed building, the overall development would have a retail shed / retail park layout, scale and feel to it.

58. Guideline G1 of the Nunthorpe Design Statement seeks to maintain Nunthorpe as a green and leafy suburb, with the retention of hedgerows and addition of trees into the streetscape. Policy H29 similarly requires the retention and integration of existing mature trees and hedgerows where possible. The proposed site and landscape plans appear to show that the existing hedgerow which runs along the south, east, and western boundaries of the site will largely be retained, with only small portions removed along the east and western boundaries to facilitate the development footpaths. New hedges and trees are to be planted as part of the landscaping of the site and, once established, they would provide an element of screening, particularly with respect to the associated car parking and weld mesh fencing that surrounds it. Where appropriate, part (n) of Policy H29 requires the use of SUDs to be maximised and, to that end, a pond will be introduced along the western edge of the site, which the application specifies would improve biodiversity at the site as well as drainage.

59. A key element of the masterplan set out in the Nunthorpe Grange Design Code is the inclusion of a linear park and associated green infrastructure around the south and west boundaries of the allocation site that will push development away from the site boundary and create a visual and acoustic buffer that will transition between open countryside and the allocation site. It is advised that the linear park should include shared pathways and features such as a trim trail type installation, short stop seating and public sculpture. The proposed footpath, seating, and landscaping along the south and western edges of the site would help to establish the creation of a linear park within the 'Land at Nunthorpe, South of



Guisborough Road' allocation site. A condition can be attached in the event of approval to secure this information.

60. On balance, it is considered that the proposals do not provide a high quality development as a result of the poor design, form and layout, which would not be in keeping with or sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area. The proposals would be in conflict with local Policies DC1, CS4, CS5, H29 as well as the guidance set out in the Nunthorpe Design Statement and Nunthorpe Grange masterplan. Moreover, Paragraph 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

#### Conclusion

61. Although the principle of a place of worship would be deemed as a departure from the adopted Development Plan, it could also be considered a compatible use within the allocation at Nunthorpe Grange which identifies the land primarily for residential development. Moreover, there are no significant technical objections to many parts of the development, which is deemed to be acceptable in principle with regard to matters of noise, flooding, residential amenity, ecology and biodiversity.

62. The report has, however, given consideration to the highway implications from the development and significant concerns have been raised over the potential adverse impacts from site activities, especially the Interchange Meetings which could see over 280 vehicles arrive and depart from the site within a short timeframe. The developer has put forward a car park management plan where marshals would assist vehicles into and out of the car park to ensure maximum efficiency, although it has been reported that such a strategy requires a high level of precision and that small margins of error – which are not always in the applicant's control – could result in significant adverse impacts on the local highway network. Moreover, whilst the potential for significant highways impacts from the development is expected to occur only once every three weeks, it has been discussed that there is no reasonable or practical way for Planning to restrict site activities – especially those that cause most harm – and so it is entirely possible for similar activities to become more frequent.

63. Paragraph 114(d) of the NPPF states that it should be ensured that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (or on highway safety) can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. In this case, however, officers have considered the proposals and are of the view that no mitigation can reasonably be achieved given the existing highway layout and environmental restrictions. The impacts from the proposed development must, therefore, be considered on their own merits based on the information submitted.

64. Both the design of the gospel hall building and the general layout of the site have also been assessed as being of a poor quality. While the materials palette of the main hall building is deemed to reflect the local context and in line with the materials considered to be acceptable in the Nunthorpe Grange Design Code, they are unable to mask the sheer scale and mass of the building. The design features very little relief or break in the elevations, which gives the building a very functional appearance that detracts from the visual amenity of the area and is not sympathetic to the local character of the surrounding environment and fails to meet the design aspirations for Nunthorpe Grange.

65. The Government's National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places document identifies ten key characteristics for developments to create well designed places. Relevant to this development, these include: Context – enhances the surroundings, Identity – attractive and distinctive, Built form – a coherent pattern of development, and Movement – accessible and easy to move around. As a result of the issues described in relation to the building design and layout, it is considered that the development fails to achieve the aspirations of the adopted design code and the above key characteristics identified in the national design guide.

66. Paragraph 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that '*development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design codes*'. Local Policies CS4, CS5, DC1 and H29, Middlesbrough's Urban Design SPD and the Nunthorpe Design Statement SPD clearly sets out the aspirations for development to create a strong sense of place with clear character areas and good functionality. The proposed layout is considered not to meet these aspirations and, therefore, permission should be refused in accordance with the NPPF.

67. The development is therefore considered to be in conflict with local policies DC1(b), (c) and (d), CS4(i) and (l), CS5(a), (c) and (f), H29(b) and CS18(a) as well as the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework – Paragraphs 115, 135 and 139 in particular – and the Officer recommendation is for refusal.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

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### Refuse for the reasons below

1. Reason for Refusal 1

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development would fail to be of a high quality design and would be out of keeping with the existing and planned positive character of the area taking into account the scale of the building, the extent of car parking and general scale and layout arrangements, being contrary to development Plan Policies DC1(b), CS4(g) and (l), CS5(a), (c), (f), and H29(b), Nunthorpe Design Statement Policies CA1 and D1, the Nunthorpe Grange Design Code and Paragraphs 135 and 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

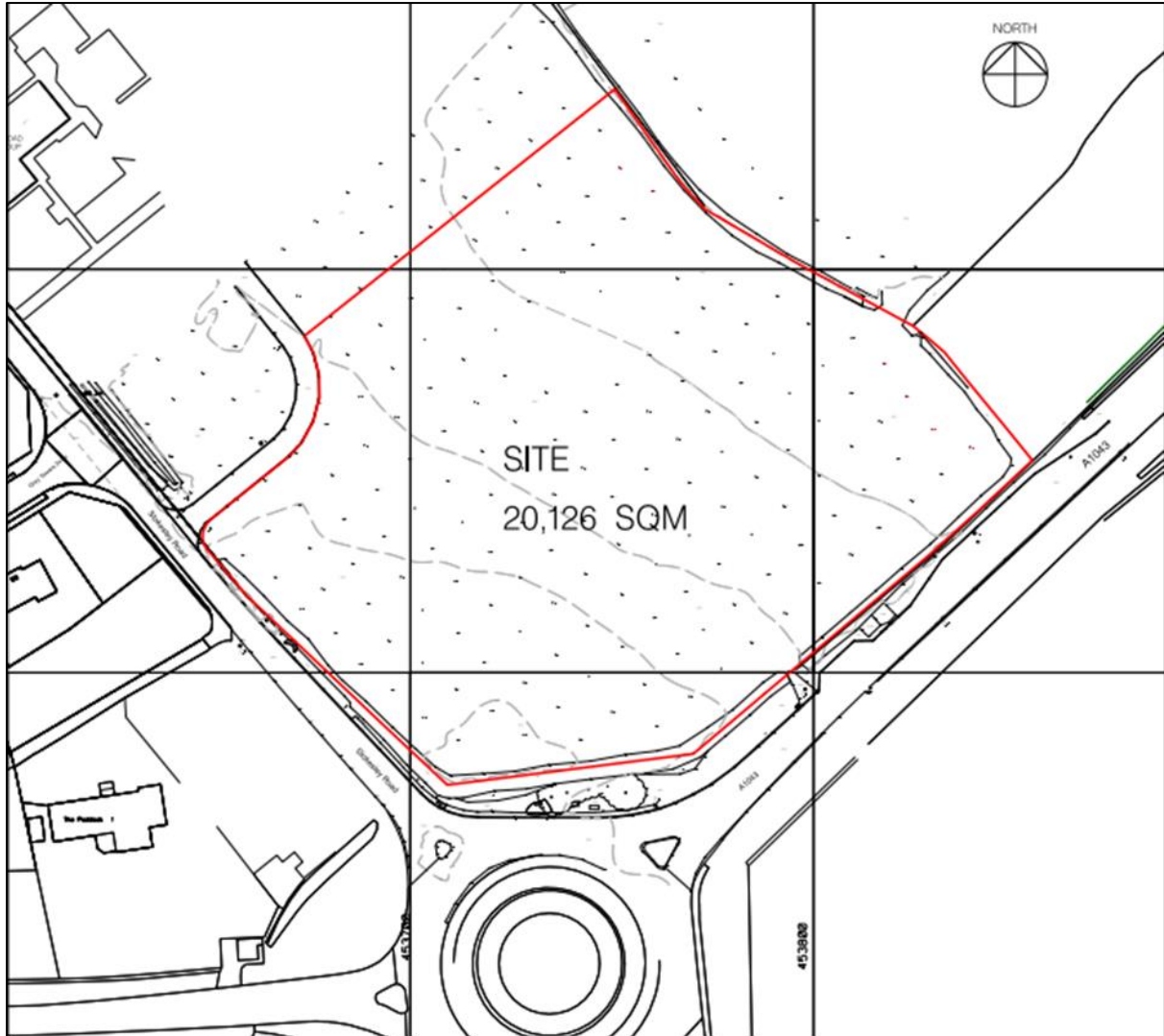
2. Reason for Refusal 2

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed use with high volumes of vehicles arriving and departing from the site over a short period of time, is likely to have a significant harmful impact on the movement of traffic on the surrounding public highways. This is considered contrary to Development Plan Policies DC1(d), CS4(g), CS18(a) and Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

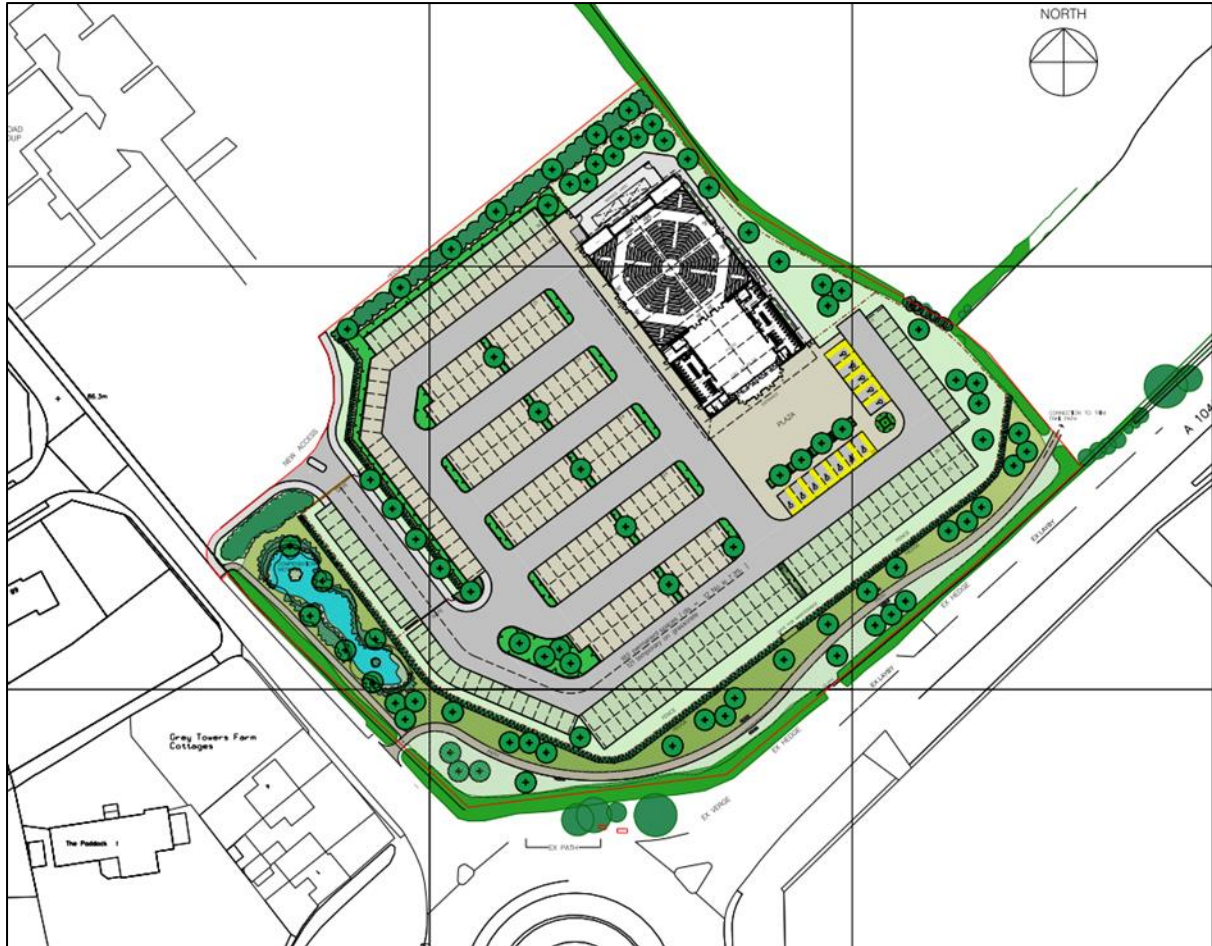
Case Officer: Peter Wilson

Committee Date: 05-Sep-2024

**Appendix 1: Location Plan**



**Appendix 2: Proposed Site Plan**



**Appendix 3: Proposed Elevations**

