



Eastcote and Northwood Hills United Reformed Church, Joel Street, Northwood Hills
Pre-Application - Supplementary statement 20 May 2021

LBH Conservation Officer's comments in **bold**

Theis + Khan's comments in regular

'The proposed development would not have an impact on the historic built environment.'

Houses (Lichfield Road)

'The principle of the houses would be deemed admissible. However, it is not clear from the submitted information where the ground level of the proposed houses sits. It is recognised that the site sits at a lower level than the road. However, it is important that site and ground level are clarified, to ensure the height of the building and associated roof eaves integrates well into the Lichfield Road street scene. As has been submitted for the church, a scaled cross-section of the houses from ground level up to the roof ridge would need to be submitted.'

- We are pleased that the principle of houses would be deemed admissible. We have attached a cross-section illustrating how the proposed houses sit in relation to the road and site.

Church (Joel Street)

Theis + Khan **Supplementary Design statement**

Existing church - The Joel Street church site is not in a Conservation area and the building is not locally or nationally listed. The existing church was designed in 1955 by architects Gordon Jackson & Partners and although regarded fondly by some church members, it is not recognised as being of significant architectural value. Added to this, current opinion within the United Reformed Church regards the Joel Street church elevation as blank and forbidding, due to its visually impenetrable façade that gives no clue as to the activities taking place inside. The combination of the solid timber front entrance door, small side windows and obscured glass PVC first floor window give the church an unwelcoming appearance and expression which work against the core values of inclusivity and welcome that the United Reformed Church seeks to offer to the community.

In addition to the existing church building, the Templeton Hall was very quickly and economically built as a side extension in the early 2000s to accommodate the Alzheimer's Society after their hospital site was closed. The Alzheimer's Society has now vacated its section of the church and the extension now presents a visually lacklustre addition to the Joel Street frontage. It was built in a short-term arrangement with the Eastcote and Northwood Hills URC members who in effect, allowed the front of the church to be carved off as a new entrance hall for the Templeton Centre with the new extension providing meeting hall and ancillary accommodation. The extension was designed ostensibly as a separate building and so it does not sit comfortably with the original church and is not a high quality architectural solution.

Proposed church and community centre design – The proposed church and community centre will be a facility available for everyone of all faiths in the community to use. It is envisioned to be a lively, sociable hub of activity that will generate social and community well-being.

The new community facility is being funded by the United Reformed Church members for the benefit of the community and has the ambition to create a new building of very high architectural quality within

the available budget. Theis + Khan architects have many years of experience designing high quality church and community buildings. As well as several RIBA Awards, the practice was nominated for the prestigious RIBA Stirling Award in 2010 for a mixed use building, Bateman's Row.

As part of the initial design brief, Theis + Khan were asked by the Eastcote and Northwood Hills URC members to directly address the problem of the existing Joel Street frontage that they found, actively discouraged people from visiting or approaching the church. The brief specifically requested that the proposed elevations should be as open and visually welcoming as possible, allowing people to immediately see the building as a community hub, open to everyone with multiple activities taking place. Large areas of glazing were specifically asked for in the brief to ensure full visibility into and from the centre. In parallel to the open and welcoming elevations, the ramps and steps needed to gain level access to the retained church building are deliberately wide and generous to enable people of varying physical ability to approach the church and community centre from all directions. A new terrace at centre level encourages users of the community café to sit outside, further attracting people into the church community centre.

We have addressed the Conservation officer's specific comments shown in **bold** below:

Church (Joel Street)

'There would be some concerns in regard to the alterations to the appearance of the church. The existing brick facade is a characteristic feature of the building, and loss of the small original windows would be disappointing.'

- We agree that brick is a defining characteristic of the existing building and have used the brick corbel detail seen over the existing arched window on other parts of the new elevation as a reference to brick detailing of that era and to visually tie the elevation together.

'The insertion of large glazed openings would dramatically alter the appearance of the original building and significantly unbalance the symmetry of the front elevation.'

- As explained above, one of the main elements of the brief was to create an open and welcoming elevation to bring light and views into the building. We have therefore inserted large areas of glazing to positively create a dramatic change to the elevation in order to send out a clear message to the community that a new hub is open and ready to welcome them.

'It is strongly advised the symmetry of the existing building is maintained. The fenestration arrangement to the side addition creates a boxy built form, somewhat detracting from the original church building. Brick is a defining characteristic of the existing building it is advised the extent of glazing particularly at first floor level is reduced.'

- We agree that the symmetry of the elevation is important. The retained church elevation remains symmetrical even with the larger windows. The extension to the north side of the church is deliberately asymmetrical as this references the existing Templeton Hall, creates a visual step up to the neighbouring block of flats and maximises the space available in the car park. The use of a matching brick binds it to the existing church elevation allowing the existing main church entrance to remain as the most important central feature whilst creating a fully glazed community café façade to the terrace at ground floor and a new community hall at first floor. The full width glazing at first floor level will allow light and views into the hall enlivening the space both for people using it and for people walking past the centre and looking in, a fundamental part of the brief.

'The proposed rendered section would introduce a new material finish to the site. Whilst views may be limited due to the proposed locations along the side elevation and to the rear of the existing building it would still be significantly contrasting against the natural tones of the brickwork. Ideally brick should be used across the site.'

- It is agreed that ideally brick should be used wherever possible. However the insulated render has been proposed for the following reasons:
 - It is self-finished so would not need to be repainted.
 - It is white coloured to maximise light into adjacent spaces.
 - It is more economic and affordable than new brickwork and is within the church's current construction budget.

'It is encouraged that the flat roof is upgraded to a green roof, adding further greenery to the site.'

- It is an ambition of the church to install 'green' flat roofs if the budget allows.

'If approved, a condition requiring the submission of further details relating to all external material finishes associated to the proposed development (church addition and new houses) would be required.'

- We would provide samples of all external material finishes associated with the church and new houses as required.