

**Design at**  
**Hillingdon Pentecostal Church**  
**Kingston Lane**  
**Uxbridge UB8 3PW**

**The site**

The property is a church, where it has religious values, as well as local interest for use of the site as multifunctional occasions. The site is set on the Kingston Lane, in a wide-open plot, surrounded by farm land, and green spaces. There is parking for 33 car parking spaces, with 2 access bays, and it has great transport links through bus stops along Kingston Lane. The church is a single storey building, with double height spaces.

**The proposal**

The proposal is to add a playground, outdoor recreational court for the users of the church. The court will be placed to the side of the church, where it can be access from the car park side gated entrance, as well as through the main church building. The church has a weekly schedule, where the proposed play area will be used by the youth coming into the site as well as the elders.

The court will be made from a permeable base, resin bound surfacing, which allows the natural filtration of rainwater through its porous build up. The surround to the court will be in metal, which will be aluminium, painted in a dark colour, like black or dark green, to blend in with its surrounding context. The court will not be very visible from Kingston Lane as there is a high gated fence that separates the front of the church and the car park, from the private amenity space.

Photo below shows the design idea,





## The use

The below table shows the many uses of the church building and its external spaces, which needs a more functional outdoor area, where currently there is only grass laid spaces, which get wet and soggy when it rains, making the surface unusable for reactional activities.

Throughout the week, there is activities taking place, the court will be multifunctional, meaning it would be used for sports, for exercise, for social gatherings, for games, as a youth club, for outdoor parties, for social clubs and charity works.

WEEKLY USE of CHURCH BUILDING	
Days of Use:	Sunday - Saturday
On Site:	One Pastor on Site (Tuesday - Friday from 10am onwards)
<b>Sunday</b>	• 3 Services (See The Traffic Survey)
<b>Monday</b>	• Young Persons Club
<b>Tuesday</b>	• Church & Garden Maintenance • Treasurer & Administration (Voluntary) • Lunchtime - Open Hospitality (Attendees come by bus)
<b>Wednesday</b>	• Open for Pastoral Needs & Administration
<b>Thursday</b>	• Church and Garden Maintenance • Treasurer & Administration • House Fellowships (Meet at Home)
<b>Friday</b>	• Mothers & Toddlers Group term time - Community
<b>Saturday (AM)</b>	• Dads Toddler Group • Mens' Group • Teaching Group • Prayer Breakfast • Multicultural Meetings (Church & Community)
Occasional use of Church Building:	• Student Lunches
	• Funerals
	• Marriage blessings
	• Baptisms
	• Courses: Child Protection Safe Food Handling First Aid Planning/Teaching Marriage Parenting
	• Celebrations within the church family
	• Charity Work - Fund raising Events & Care of the Homeless
	• Children's Young Persons Ministry Socials/Clubs/Practices/Charity Work

## **Impact**

The court would not impact any of the existing facilities, nor the existing setup of the church. The space for the court is unused, and is a grass piece of land which is laid to lawn. The neighbouring properties are Greenland, farming land, where no one would be impacted by the court.

The implementation of this court would enhance the experience of the church users, through many more activities, making the outdoors more useable, and opening the possibility of multi functional users and uses.

## **Green Belt**

### **Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the context of the Green Belt**

The development plan proposals map identifies the site as being within the Green Belt. As a result policy OL4 of the UDP applies. This policy sets out that; "The local planning authority will only permit the replacement or extension of buildings within the green belt if:

- (i) the development would not result in any disproportionate change in the bulk and character of the original building;
- (ii) the development would not significantly increase the built up appearance of the site;
- (iii) having regard to the character of the surrounding area the development would not injure the visual amenities of the green belt by reason of siting, materials, design, traffic or activities generated."

The first criterion of the policy is consistent with the policy guidance in the NPPF, which sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate, with a number of exceptions, including;

"the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;"

The existing building amounts to a floorspace of 343sqm. It can be seen that the current proposal exceeds the 50% increase considered to be the threshold for a disproportionate increase, and would therefore be considered inappropriate development.

As a result, very special circumstances ("VSC") need to be demonstrated (as per paragraph 88 of the NPPF). The VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The other considerations that make up the VSC fall into two parts. Firstly, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (para 79 of the NPPF). The NPPF goes on to set out the five purposes of the Green Belt (para 80), and in this case, the following purposes are relevant;

- ☐ to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- ☐ to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- ☐ to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

The site previously had three sheds which were removed resulting in an improvement to the coverage of the Green Belt in buildings.

The removal of the outbuildings and the consequent reduction in floorspace will result in a reduction in urban sprawl, prevent neighbouring settlements merging into each other, and safeguard the countryside from encroachment. This positive impact on the purposes for including the land within the Green Belt is a material consideration to which significant weight should be attached.

The second consideration is that the existing church building serves a function beyond that of worship services on a Sunday. The church has a community service function, as demonstrated in the table set out at Appendix 1 below. However, the numbers from the local community using these facilities is increasing, as is the attendance at the Sunday worship services. The existing accommodation within the church is limited and outdated and inadequate to serve the growing numbers of community users.

The outdoor sports space will enable the church to expand and improve its community facilities and to allow more users to access the services and activities that the church runs. Policy R10 of the UDP sets out that the local planning authority will “regard proposals for new meeting halls, buildings for education, social, community and health services, including libraries, nursery, primary and secondary school buildings, as acceptable in principle subject to the other policies of this plan”.

In addition, policy R9 of the UDP sets out the following;

“The local planning authority will permit proposals for buildings to be used for religious and cultural purposes if;

- (i) they provide adequate parking in accordance with the local planning authority's adopted standards;
- (ii) any proposed new buildings or extensions harmonise with or complement the scale and appearance of existing and neighbouring properties;
- (iii) they are sited where they do not prejudice the amenities of neighbouring occupiers by reason of noise, traffic or visual amenity; and
- (iv) access arrangements are satisfactory;
- (v) the proposed use does not conflict with the other policies of this plan.”

The criteria set out are addressed below and in the accompanying Design and Access Statement. However, it is clear that there is a policy encouragement for the provision of buildings used for religious and cultural purposes.

The Local Plan policy CI1 sets out that the council will ensure that community and social infrastructure is provided to cater for the needs of the existing community and future populations, and they will support the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities.

The policy encouragement is also found in the NPPF. Paragraph 70 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities, such as meeting places, cultural buildings and places of worship.

The NPPF sets out that this will enhance the sustainability of communities. Paragraph 69 requires planning decisions to promote opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other.

As a result, the proposal represents an opportunity for the development of the site to be used not only for religious and cultural use in a more efficient and effective way, but also for the church to realise its vision of having a positive impact in the community.

The building currently serves the community, regardless of the religious, cultural, age or gender background of the individual user, but is hampered by the physical restraints of the existing building. The increase in size through the outdoor sports community space, will enable the church to have a more positive impact in the community, serving needs in the context of central and local government cuts. This is a material consideration that should carry significant weight.

The above two considerations should carry sufficient weight to represent VSC that overcomes any harm by way of inappropriateness and any other harm. The harm by way of inappropriateness is discussed above, and “any other harm” is discussed below. However, it is important to note that there is, in fact, no other harm, and therefore it is submitted that VSC exist, and that the development should be considered acceptable in principle in its impact on the green belt policy and the green belt.

**154.** A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- (a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- (b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- (c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- (d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- (e) limited infilling in villages;
- (f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- (g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
  - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
  - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

The assessment of the project against the NPPF, 154, would apply where we would be meeting the criteria (b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The outdoor space being created will be permeable, will not impact its surroundings, will be open from its sides, and transparent in design, it will be used in connection with the existing use of the land, which is currently used for outdoor functions, like weddings or outdoor prayer meets.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the court itself, would have very limited impact to any of its surroundings, and be used by the church users only, through a controlled timetable. The design of the court is such that it does not damage the grounds, and remains porous and the ground remains permeable. The surrounding cage would be in a dark material to blend in with the surroundings. The overall proposal would enhance the experience of the church users and allow for a broader use of the outdoors.