

Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	7th March 2012
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	11/0352/IC Plan 03/11
			Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	Guy Phillips	Contact No:	01475 712422
Subject:	Change of use of former church to theatre and academy of music and drama with associated cafe at Orangefield Baptist Church, Orangefield Place, Greenock		

SITE DESCRIPTION

The triangular shaped site contains the former Orangefield Baptist Church and is bound by Orangefield Place to the south, Orangefield Lane to the west and the roundabout at Inverkip Road/Nelson Street/South Street to the north. Inverkip Road is the A78 trunk road. Orangefield Place has a traffic order restricting traffic to one way from east to west. The site rises steeply up from the roundabout to Orangefield Place. A long grassed triangle, containing two mature trees extends from the church's east gable to meet the junction of Orangefield Place and Inverkip Road. Parallel to the boundary with Orangefield Place is an approximately 1.5m high masonry retaining wall topped by railings. The former church extends over three levels with a hall at lower ground, the sanctuary at ground level and a gallery level at first floor. St Patrick's Church and priest house lies opposite.



PROPOSAL

It is proposed to change the use of the former church to a theatre and academy of music and drama with an associated cafe. The proposed theatre would be formed at gallery level, utilising the church pews. The open well from the gallery into the former sanctuary would be floored over and a stage constructed. The cafe would be at ground floor level, as would be toilet and changing accommodation. A dance studio, teaching/practice area, office, plant room and further toilet accommodation would occupy the lower ground level.



LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy R1- Designated Centres (abbreviated extract)

The following Centres are designated:

1. Town Centres, as defined on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Greenock, subdivided into a 'Central Shopping Area' and 'Outer Mixed/Commercial Area';
- (b) Port Glasgow;
- (c) Gourock;

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to assist urban regeneration and sustainable travel patterns. This will be achieved by encouraging each Centre to serve its own retail and service catchments without detriment to other Centres and to the overall roles of Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock as the principal Centres serving the Authority.

Local Plan Policy R2 - Support for Designated Centres

The designated Centres identified in Policy R1 will be protected, enhanced and developed, where resources allow, through a range of initiatives aimed at achieving the following:

- (a) encouraging a diversity of retail, leisure, civic, public administration, office, residential and other uses, of the type which the Council, as Planning Authority, considers to be appropriate to the development of the individual Centres, in order to support their vitality and viability, particularly through mixed use developments and through the use of upper floors of commercial premises;
- (b) identifying and promoting opportunities for new development and for the redevelopment and reuse of existing premises, both within and on the edge of the defined Centres;
- (c) improving the quality of the urban environment through implementing programmes for the improvement of individual properties, the streetscape and open spaces;
- (d) improving accessibility and integration of services by bus, train, ferry and taxi;
- (e) improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists through the provision of safe and convenient facilities and routes both into and within the town centres;
- (f) managing provision of freight access and of car, motorcycle and cycle parking for residents, visitors, workers and shoppers in accordance with an approved strategy;
- (g) managing traffic flows to minimise congestion and pollution and to give priority to the disabled, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and service vehicles; and
- (h) developing Town Centre Action Plans in partnership with other agencies.

Local Plan Policy R5 - Greenock Town Centre: Outer Mixed/Commercial Area (abbreviated extract)

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to protect the character, both existing and potential, of the different divisions of the Outer mixed/Commercial Area of Greenock Town Centre, as defined on the Proposals Map and below. In addition to development in keeping with the existing character of the area, the following town centre uses will also be permitted in the identified divisions (G) to (L)

- (H) WEST END OFFICE AND CIVIC AREA and
- (I) SIR MICHAEL STREET/KING STREET RESIDENTIAL AREA
Use Class 2 (Financial, Professional and Other Services);
Use Class 10 (Community Uses); and
Use Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure).

CONSULTATIONS

Transport Scotland - No objections subject to a condition preventing direct vehicular access to the trunk road.

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services - No objections. The proposed use is no more onerous than its predecessor and surrounding streets have sufficient waiting and loading restrictions to control parking and dropping off. It is noted that although on street parking can be at a premium, the West Station car park is within easy walking distance.

Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities - no objections subject to conditions limiting the hours of operation and noise generation.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 6th January 2012 as a Schedule 3 (formerly bad neighbour) development.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

83 written representations have been received of which 77 are in support and 6 in objection.

The objectors are concerned that:-

Road safety

- Road safety would be adversely affected due to no off street parking being proposed, an existing high demand for on street parking and the lack of a pavement on the north side of Orangefield Place.
- congestion and increased demand for on street parking shall make it difficult for the congregation of St Patrick's Church to attend services.
- there would be unauthorised use of St Patrick's church car park.
- flooding events at the nearby West Station area result in heavy vehicles being re-routed along Orangefield Place, creating congestion, delays and parking difficulties.
- Pedestrians and cyclists would have difficulty in navigating through the area.

Social issues

- St Patrick's Church allegedly suffers from individuals engaging in anti social behaviour. If planning permission is granted, the parish clergy may suffer a further loss of security, privacy and sleep.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the determination of this planning application are the Local Plan, the consultation responses and the written representations.

Policy R1 of the Local Plan identifies the site as lying within area (H) of the outer mixed/commercial area of Greenock Town Centre where policies R2 and R5 support community uses and assembly and leisure and the redevelopment of existing premises.

Given the acceptance of the principle of development, the details of the proposal and the specifics of operating from this site require assessment. Potential impacts are road safety and noise and activity.

The starting point is the existing permitted use and the potential impacts of church activity. Typically, church buildings see comings and goings throughout the day and evening 7 days a week. In this case all parking is on street. Church services and special events all create the potential for larger gatherings, while church meetings and clubs generate smaller groups coming and going more frequently. This range of activity is similar to what is anticipated by this proposal. The Head of Safer & Inclusive Communities offers no objections on noise grounds but suggests conditions be attached restricting the hours of operation and noise levels within nearby noise sensitive buildings. I am in agreement with the suggested conditions. The topography of the site is such that there is no potential to form off street parking. There are no objections from Transport Scotland and the Head of Environmental & Commercial Services on road safety grounds. While there are no proposals for direct vehicular access to the trunk road, procedurally the recommendation from Transport Scotland requiring a preventative condition must be imposed.

It can be difficult to bring redundant church buildings back into beneficial use due to the practicalities of converting the large interior spaces. In this instance the church is not a listed building but is, nevertheless, a building of good architectural quality and occupying a prominent site on a roundabout on a trunk road. I consider it important that it is brought back into beneficial use.

While I note the objection, perceived issues of antisocial behaviour are not justifications for refusing planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to conditions.

Conditions

1. There shall be no live music, performances, rehearsals and classes undertaken between the hours of 23:00 and 07:00 on any day.
2. Any noise from performances, rehearsals and classes shall not exceed 35dB LAeq within St Patrick's Church during hours of worship, and shall not exceed 45dB LAeq(16hours) within any other noise sensitive property.
3. There shall be no means of direct vehicular access to the trunk road.

Reasons

1. To prevent harm to nearby residential properties from noise.
2. To prevent harm to nearby residential properties from noise.
3. To minimise interference with the safety and free flow of traffic on the trunk road.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form
2. Application plans
3. Inverclyde Local Plan
4. Consultation responses
5. Written representations.



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