

21/00261/FUL - RAYLEIGH BAPTIST CHURCH, HIGH STREET, RAYLEIGH

Contents:

1. Baptists Together Comments
2. Further ECC Conservation Officer comments
3. Ecology Matters
4. Officer Comments

1. Baptists Together Comments

Comments have now been received from Baptists Together (officially The Baptist Union of Great Britain). These comments were sent direct to ECC Conservation team. They are as follows:

The Listed Buildings Advisory Committee met on 07 June 2021 and the application was approved subject to agreeing matters of detail and specification. The Committee delegated authority to a sub-group of its members to agree these matters and issue a Certificate of Authorisation once these matters have been agreed to their satisfaction. We will write to you again with a copy of the Certificate of Authorisation once issued by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, countersigned by the Trust Corporation. The Committee considered that the amendment of the lift shaft height confirmed following receipt of the concerns raised by Rochford District Council in their letter dated 30/04/2021, Reference 21/00261/FUL improved the scheme and addressed the issues noted satisfactorily.

I also enclose a copy of the Minutes of the Meeting where the application was discussed.

The minutes of the meeting referred to are as follows:

An application had been received on 17 January 2021. The work proposed involves:

Repairs, alterations and additions to the current Base building (used to provide and deliver activities to the community of Rayleigh and the church family). An extension will create a level all person access to the "Base" itself and will provide an internal level link to the main church complex. A new passenger lift will provide accessible access to the first floor and provide

additional activity space as well as a small tea kitchen and counselling room. The reconfigured space will provide a warm and welcoming foyer with additional rooms which can be used by the community and various end users. The existing dated toilets and kitchen will be replaced with modern compliant facilities and conveniences. The hall itself will benefit from having a partition added enabling two spaces to be used simultaneously with access to welfare facilities at both ends. A mezzanine floor will create an area for long term storage of equipment used by the church. Its supporting steel frame will not impact on the integrity of the existing structure or walls. The layout of these facilities has been carefully considered to ensure maximum flexibility of the space. Repairs and restoration carried out will aim to preserve heritage features of the old school hall section of the Base building using approved methods and materials. Repairs will also be carried out on the below ground drainage system.

The premises are Grade II listed.

The church in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The Baptist Union Corporation Limited is the trustee.

The proposals have received initial approval by the Baptist Union Corporation Limited.

The works are internal, so the usual Public Notice has been displayed.

The works are external, so the usual Public Notice and advertisements have been published.

The closing date for representations was 22 February 2021. The following representations have been requested and received.

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Date received</i>	<i>Summary of Comments</i>
<i>Ancient Monuments Society</i>	<i>Email 17.2.2021</i>	<i>Concern about difference between the appearance of the two sets of windows</i>
<i>Historic England</i>	<i>Letter 9.2.2021</i>	<i>No comment</i>
<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Letter 30.4.2021</i>	<i>Unable to support the application</i>

A small group had been appointed to consider the application before the meeting. They were The Revd Kevin Burdett, Mark Cleveland and Paul Scott-Evans.

Paul Scott-Evans and Kevin Burdett presented the Small Groups Report.

Paul Scott-Evans reported that at the moment the Local Authority Conservation Office is opposing the application as they consider that it is out of place and impinging on the historical building. The church have a meeting planned with a couple of Council members on 30th June.

Mark Cleveland said that it was a curious situation as the Conservation Officer appears to be going against the plans before the Listed Buildings element of the project have been determined by the Committee. It really needs a conversation between the two parties. It was believed that the Conservation Officer was basing his decision on the lift tower being built on the old school building rather than the 60's concrete block building at the back.

After a very lengthy discussion about the lift shaft head, cladding and the large two storey window the application was APPROVED subject to agreeing matters of detail and specification and the Committee delegated authority to the Small Group to issue a Certificate of Authorisation once they had agreed to their satisfaction these matters. The Small Group were to bring the matter back to the Committee only if they felt that it was necessary.

This decision was to be communicated to the church and the Conservation Officer.

2. Further ECC Conservation Officer Comments

I'm writing to confirm that the Certificate of Authorisation does not change my initial advice. I remain concerned with the scale, massing and appearance of the extension which would be a prominent addition, detracting from the setting of the listed Church. It may be helpful to note that whilst the Church does benefit from Ecclesiastical Exemption, this is only to works directly upon the fabric of the listed building. Thus, RDC must still consider the effect of the proposals upon the setting of the listed building which, in my opinion, would result in less than substantial harm to its significance.

3. Ecology Matters

As the works are proposed to a gable ended pre 1914 building to form the mezzanine floor there is the potential for bats to be present. If permission were to be granted a condition requiring a bat survey to be undertaken prior to any works commencing should be attached to any approval. This prior commencement condition has been agreed by the agent.

4. Officer Comments

It is not considered that the response from Baptists Together outweighs the harm the proposal is considered to have upon the heritage asset. Any impact upon bats can be sufficiently mitigated by submission of a bat survey and any necessary works undertaken to ensure their protection. The officer recommendation remains that of refusal for the reasons stated in the officer report.