

SECTION '1' – Applications submitted by the London Borough of Bromley

Application No : 17/00736/LBC

Ward:
Biggin Hill

Address : St Georges RAF Chapel Main Road Biggin Hill TN16 3EJ

OS Grid Ref: E: 541078 N: 160603

Applicant : Biggin Hill Memorial Museum Trust

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Listed Building Consent - Proposed Memorial Museum (Use Class D2) with ancillary café/shop (Use Class A1/A3) with associated car parking, landscaping and alterations to the access points, demolition of modern annex building at St Georges Chapel and minor alterations to the listed building.

Key designations:

Conservation Area: RAF Biggin Hill
Biggin Hill Noise Contours
Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area
Green Belt
London City Airport Safeguarding
Major Development Sites
Smoke Control SCA 24
Technical Sites BH

Location

St Georges RAF Chapel is located on the eastern side of Main Road. The site is designated as being within the Major Developed Site Area 1 (West Camp) of the wider Biggin Hill Airport site and is located within the Green Belt. The Chapel and wider area also form part of the Biggin Hill RAF Station Conservation Area. The Chapel is Grade II Listed. Biggin Hill is identified in the London Plan as a designated Strategic Outer London Development Centre (SOLDC).

The site is bounded to the north and east by the wider Biggin Hill Airport site and lies in close proximity to the Passenger Terminal and Control Tower. To the west of Main Road opposite the site is the Officers Mess building which is statutory Grade II listed and to the south is Station Headquarters (Building 33) which is also Grade II listed.

The Chapel has a single primary access from Main Road with parking for visitors located to the northern elevation of the chapel building. The main chapel entrance is set back from the western elevation with an existing memorial garden located to the south.

Several mature trees are found within and around the site, none of which are subject to individual tree preservation orders however are protected through the Conservation Area status.

St George's RAF Chapel was originally constructed in 1951 as a permanent war memorial for those who lost their lives serving within Biggin Hill Sector during WWII. Gate guardians are placed on either side of the entrance in the form of a Spitfire and Hurricane aircraft.

Proposal

It is proposed to develop a new memorial museum, café and visitors shop at the Chapel site. The development is to be single storey in height with the predominant built form to be sited to the northern elevation following the ridge line of the building to enclose the eastern and southern boundary of the site to create a walled memorial and contemplation garden, framing the Chapel when viewed from the highway.

The design of the memorial museum can be described as contemporary with the primary entrance to the museum being directly from the car parking area to the north which would enable the chapel to be accessed separately, if needed, for services etc.

Minor alterations are also proposed to the internal layout of the Chapel itself inclusive of the change of use of the rear most room within the Chapel to be used as exhibition space when necessary.

The application also proposes a new access to the site to the north close to the Cadets building which will feed into the car park area to the north.

Consultations

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and the following representations were received:

Letters of Support:

- Fully endorse the planning application as the RAF should be remembered in this manner for the future of Biggin Hill

Letters of Objection:

- Wholly inappropriate
- The museum should not be built around the Chapel
- The current Chapel Annex complements the Chapel and should not be altered
- The plans are out of keeping with the dignified nature of the building, as is the proposed wall that would surround the Memorial Garden.
- Strongly object to the partial change of use of the Chapel
- The consecrated ground cannot be protected during the construction works

Consultees

Conservation Officer - St Georges RAF Chapel is a Grade II statutory listed building built in 1951 in memory of the 453 airmen killed in the Biggin Hill Sector during WW2. Its significance is accurately described in the submitted Heritage Statement. It also lies within the RAF Biggin Hill Conservation Area as part of West Camp.

The proposed external changes comprise demolition of an annex built in the 1990s, although the link which contains a stained glass panel by Aircraft Association remains. The annex has no particular significance other than being a sympathetic design for its time. The proposed replacement buff brick and bronze window building would wrap around the original chapel. I believe the design has been expertly handled by the architects and would not overwhelm the host nor detract in any way from the CA. The design itself is contemporary design but highly restrained and respectful at the same time.

Internally the building is to remain as is with the exception of some new folding doors between the nave and the St Georges room. Otherwise the proposed works, as documented in the conservation report, are largely like for like repair of existing fabric to secure its future.

In conclusion, the proposal has very strong public benefits insofar as it secures the future of the chapel building, and better reveals the heritage of Biggin Hill through the heritage centre element.

No objections are made subject to conditions.

Historic England – A detailed pre-application advice response which is referenced in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies this application was provided. The sensitive approach adopted by the development team is welcomed and no further comments are offered at this stage. Historic England have assessed the application in accordance with the Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015 and do not consider that it requires the authorisation of the Secretary of State on this occasion.

Historic England (Archaeology) –

Town Centre Renewal - A masterplan proposing development options for the adjoining West Camp site is being prepared by the Renewal team with the objectives of exploring opportunities for the adaptive reuse of existing heritage buildings and the potential use of land for an aviation academy to support the airport. The Renewal team have no objections and are generally supportive of the proposals as they are consistent with those in the developing masterplan and will add to the vibrancy to the area. It is noted as positive, that the proposed scheme seeks to preserve the historic character of area, whilst introducing contemporary design which complements the existing setting of the overall site.

Planning Considerations

In determining planning applications, the starting point is the development plan and any other material considerations that are relevant. The adopted development plan in this case includes the Bromley Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006) and the London Plan (2015). Relevant policies and guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) as well as other guidance and relevant legislation, must also be taken into account.

Unitary Development Plan

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the following policies:

- T1 Transport Demand
- T2 Assessment of Transport Effects
- T3 Parking
- T5 Access for people with restricted mobility
- T7 Cyclists
- T6 Pedestrians
- T7 Cyclists
- T9 Public transport
- T18 Road safety
- BE1 Design of New Developments
- BE8 Statutory Listed Buildings
- BE11 Conservation Areas
- BE4 Public Realm
- NE3 Nature conservation and development
- NE7 Development and Trees
- G1 Green Belt
- L9 Indoor recreation and leisure

C1 Community Facilities
C2 Community facilities and development
BH1 Local Environment
BH2 New Development
BH4 Passenger Terminal. Control Tower, West Camp (Area 1)

Emerging Bromley Local Plan

The Council is preparing a Local Plan and commenced a period of consultation on its proposed submission draft of the Local Plan on November 14th 2016 which closes on December 31st 2016 (under The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended). An updated Local Development Scheme was submitted to Development Control Committee on November 24th 2016 and Executive Committee on November 30th 2016, indicating the submission of the draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State in the early part of 2017. The weight attached to the draft policies increases as the Local Plan process advances.

The most relevant draft Local Plan policies include:

Draft Policy 1 – Housing Supply
Draft Policy 4 – Housing Design
Draft Policy 8 - Side Space
Draft Policy 20 – Community facilities
Draft Policy 21 – Opportunities for Community Facilities
Draft Policy 30 – Parking
Draft Policy 31 – Relieving Congestion
Draft Policy 32 – Highways Safety
Draft Policy 33 – Access for All
Draft Policy 37 – General Design of Development
Draft Policy 41 – Conservation Areas
Draft Policy 43 – Trees In Conservation Areas
Draft policy 49 – The Green Belt
Draft Policy 73 – Development and Trees
Draft Policy 103 – Biggin Hill SOLDC
Draft Policy 105 – West Camp
Draft Policy 116 – Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
Draft Policy 123 – Sustainable Design and Construction

It is proposed within the emerging Local Plan to remove the pre-application site from the Green Belt.

London Plan 2015

In strategic terms the most relevant policies include:

3.16 Protection and enhancement of social infrastructure
4.6 Support for and enhancement of arts, social, culture, sport and entertainment provision
5.12 Flood Risk Management
5.13 Sustainable Drainage
5.14 Water Quality and Wastewater Infrastructure
6.3 Assessing the Effects of Development on Transport Capacity
6.9 Cycling
6.10 Walking
6.13 Parking
7.1 Lifetime Neighbourhood

7.2 An inclusive environment
7.3 Designing out Crime
7.4 Local Character
7.8 Heritage Assets and Archaeology
7.15 Reducing and managing noise, improving and enhancing the acoustic environment and promoting appropriate soundscapes
7.16 Green Belts
7.19 Biodiversity and access to nature
7.21 Trees and woodlands
8.1 General design of development
8.7 Nature and trees
10.4 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
10.10 Sustainable design and construction

National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) is relevant, including the following paragraphs:

Paragraph 19 of the NPPF states that 'significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system'.

Paragraph 26 relates to the need for an impact assessment for leisure development that is outside a town centre. This scheme would fall below the threshold for an impact assessment to be required.

Paragraphs 87-89 relate to development in the Green Belt and state that 'As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'

Paragraphs 132 relate to heritage assets and states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Table 2.1 of the London Plan identified Biggin Hill as a potential SOLDC (Strategic Outer London Development Centre). Biggin Hill is described as having strategic functions of greater than sub-regional importance under the category of 'other transport related functions'.

Planning History

St George's RAF Chapel Applications:

The chapel was constructed in 1951 when Biggin Hill was an operational RAF base therefore planning permission would not have been required for its construction.

89/02665/OTH – Single storey side extension to the chapel – Permitted

92/01756/OTH – Erection of a perimeter fence, change of use of Roman Catholic Chapel and bedding store to parade hall and classroom/mess hall respectively and erection of a single storey covered walkway – Permitted

96/01286/OTH – Installation of a flagpole – Permitted

The Chapel was listed in 2005 along with the other original RAF buildings in West Camp.

Heritage Centre Application:

02/02371/FULL3 - Conversion of former military transport garage to create a heritage centre with associated parking - Permitted

04/02334/OUT - Demolition of existing dwellings at 2, 4, 6 & 8 Main Road and 37, 38, 39 & 40 Vincent Square; erection of building for use as Heritage Centre with associated car and coach parking and associated landscaping and upgrading of existing access. OUTLINE (Land at Former RAF Married Quarters & Nos. 2, 4, 6 & 8, Main Road, Biggin Hill) – Permitted

09/00578/FULL1 - Two storey detached building to provide Heritage Centre including associated access, parking and landscaping – Permitted

14/02136/FULL1 – Construction of a museum with integral cafeteria, display areas, lavatories and relocation of existing car park on land adjacent to the Chapel - Permitted

Conclusions

The main issues relating to the Listed Building Consent application are the impact of the scheme upon the Grade II Listed Building and whether the design and siting of the development is of an appropriate nature to complement and enhance the Chapel building.

Design

Design is a key consideration in the planning process. Good design is an important aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to undertake a design critique of planning proposals to ensure that developments would function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Proposals must establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses and support local facilities and transport networks. Developments are required to respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. New development must create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

London Plan and UDP policies further reinforce the principles of the NPPF setting out a clear rationale for high quality design. UDP Policy BE1 sets out a list of criteria which proposals will be expected to meet, the criteria is clearly aligned with the principles of the NPPF as set out above.

Policy BE8 of the Council's UDP is concerned with the impact of a scheme upon statutory listed buildings. The policy states that applications for development involving a listed building or its setting, or for a change of use of a listed building, will be permitted provided that the character, appearance and special interest of the listed building are preserved and there is no harm to its setting.

Policy BE11 of the Council's UDP states that in order to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation area, a proposal for new development for engineering

works, alteration or extension to a building, or for a change of use of land or buildings within a conservation area will be expected to:

- (i) respect of compliment the layout, scale, form and materials or existing buildings and spaces;
- (ii) respect and incorporate in the design, existing landscape or other features and contribute to the character, appearance or historic value of an area; and
- (iii) ensure that the level of activity, traffic, parking services or noise generated by the proposal will not detract from the character or appearance of the area

The chapel is a grade II statutory listed building and is within the RAF Biggin Hill Conservation Area. The listing of the building is described as follows: 'Memorial chapel to airmen lost whilst flying from Biggin Hill in WWII. Consecrated 1951, architect W Wylton Todd ARIBA. Red brickwork in Flemish bond, clay Roman tile roof on steel trusses'.

A Conservation Management Plan and Condition Report and Repair Schedule has been submitted with the application which details the Consultations undertaken throughout the design process, including with Historic England. As well as wider public consultation, open days were held on the 10th August 2016 and 1st December 2016 during which the plans were discussed and exhibited with local stakeholders and members of the public. Until December 2016 the Chapel, its contents and site was owned and run by the RAF. The site is now run by the Biggin Hill Memorial Museum Trust whose purpose is stated in the Conservation Management Plan as being 'to govern and manage the future museum site, incorporating the historic St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance, thus safeguarding the future of the Chapel'. The Conservation Report states that the aim of the development is to create exhibition galleries and new facilities within the garden of the listed Chapel with the design following the 'garden wall' concept wrapping around the Chapel; enclosing it, opening parts of it up to the wider airfield and framing views of the sky. The Conservation report includes an extensive timeline of events from the end of WWII when Winston Churchill asked people to donate to the Memorial Chapel to the present day, including 2016 when the garden of remembrance was officially consecrated.

The Grade II Listed chapel forms part of a grouping with other Listed Buildings including the former Station Headquarters, Officer's Mess, Candidate's Club and Hawkinge Block. 21 of the existing buildings out of 26 are Statutory Listed.

As well as the new build element of the scheme, the following repairs to the Listed Building are proposed:

- Repair of the window frames to the stained glass
- Replacement folding doors between the Chapel and St George's room
- Replacement of some of the fibreboard ceiling tiles to the main Chapel and St George's Room
- Replacement of damaged roof tiles
- Railings to be restored and in some instances replaced and repainted
- The wall exposed following the removal of the annexe will be rebuilt in the correct bond and stock

Further repair works are listed within the Repair Schedule. The Conservation Officer has commented on the proposed internal works stating 'Internally the building is to remain as is

with the exception of some new folding doors between the nave and the St Georges room. Otherwise the proposed works, as documented in the conservation report, are largely like for like repair of existing fabric to secure its future'. As such, Members may consider that the internal works to the Chapel are necessary and as they are to be like for like, these are only beneficial to the longevity of the building and will be undertaken in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

In terms of the new build, the proposal is for a single storey heritage centre to wrap around the side and rear of the chapel and to integrate the existing chapel through landscaped areas. The proposal would require the demolition of a northern wing which contains a boiler room and some utility areas. This element is not original to the Chapel and dates from the 1990s. No objection to the removal of this modern addition is raised by Historic England or the Conservation Officer and this element of the building has no particular significance other than being a sympathetic design for its time. The replacement exterior wall will be constructed like for like to the existing Chapel building and no objections to this are raised.

Officers consider that the proposed heritage centre is of an exemplary, sympathetic design and modest in height and appearance so as not to compete with the chapel itself but rather framing the listed building. The heights of the building are commensurate with the eaves height of the church which retains the importance of the listed building when viewed from surrounding areas and would not detract from the surrounding Conservation Area. Whilst the side and rear elevations of the chapel would be obscured there are currently few views of these sides available and therefore it is considered that the setting would be preserved, furthermore the landscaping enhancements would create attractive spaces in their own right.

In terms of proposed materials, it is considered that the Applicant has put due consideration when allowing for the finishing materials of the scheme and Officers consider that the use of the lighter buff brick in the construction of the new building stands out against the Chapel, retaining the stand alone appearance of the Listed Building. The scheme will be constructed of Flemish Bond to match the Chapel which is considered acceptable. The windows are set within large deep reveals constructed from a bronze anodized aluminium which has a contemporary and high quality finish.

It is noted that Officers raised concerns at the pre-application stage with regard to the closing of the main entranceway and the re-location of the vehicular entrance to the north of the site and the impact this would have on the significance of the Chapel itself. The Applicant states that the existing entrance and gates are to be retained on the site and used for Mass at the Chapel, pedestrians and special events and therefore will still be in some use. The partial use of this entrance is considered to protect the setting of the Chapel and prevent any impact from vehicular movements. This is also an approach that is supported by Historic England and Officers consider this now to be appropriate.

In terms of the use of the wider site, Members may consider that the provision of a Memorial Museum, integral to the Chapel is the most appropriate way to achieve the long term sustainability and vitality of the site. The Listing of the building as detailed by Historic England states 'Memorial chapel to airmen lost whilst flying from Biggin Hill in WWII. Consecrated 1951, architect W Wylton Todd ARIBA. Red brickwork in Flemish bond, clay Roman tile roof on steel trusses', thus Officers consider that the most important aspect of the Listing to be the use of the site as a Memorial, is supported in this development which seeks to continue and enhance this purpose.

Officers consider that the overall design of the proposal is respectful to the Listed Building and end purpose. The Conservation Officer raises no objections to the scheme subject to conditions. Historic England raise no objections to the scheme.

Conclusion

The design of the museum is of a high quality and is respectful to its purpose and integrated Grade II Listed Chapel. Subject to conditions requiring the submission of materials, Officers are supportive of the proposal and recommend that Listed Building Consent be granted.

