

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA 3 PLANNING COMMITTEE

03 July 2008

Report of the Acting Chief Solicitor

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 PLANNING APPEALS

Site **Church of St Thomas of Canterbury, 28 Holborough Road, Snodland**
Appeal **Against the refusal of permission A: for the demolition of the existing building and the erection of 3 houses and 2 maisonettes with parking and B: conservation area consent for the demolition of the existing building**
Appellant **Father Peter Soper**
Decision **Appeals dismissed**
Background papers file: PA/12/08
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The Inspector considered the main issue in appeal A to be whether or not the scheme would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area, including Snodland Conservation Area.

The present church occupies a fairly prominent corner site on one of the main routes through the village and although it is a low building of simple utilitarian appearance the Snodland Conservation Area Appraisal describes it as making a "positive contribution" to the townscape. The appraisal identifies a "lack of enclosure" stemming from the small gap between the church and No. 26 which is, itself, a rather awkward and incongruous, more recent, building sharing none of the Victorian character of the terrace of shops at Nos 12-24 or the houses on the opposite side of the road.

The Council accepted that the retention of the building as a community facility is not required and that redevelopment is appropriate in principle. In the Inspector's judgment the building accommodating units 3-5 would positively increase the sense of enclosure of the spaces at the road junction, bring about a better relationship with the scale and massing of the terrace of shops in Holborough Road and provide a more attractive corner feature.

However, the Inspector considered that the scale and appearance of the rear building would be out of keeping with the restrained domestic scale and layout of Queens Avenue. The new structure would be visually incongruous in that setting. Two floors of

residential accommodation with balconies, gables and dormers would be set above a bland ground floor elevation consisting mainly of a row of five garage doors more or less at the back edge of the footway and sited behind a lengthy dropped kerb. The new building would also stand well forward of the houses on the south side of Queens Avenue, thus exacerbating its over prominence and intrusion in the street scene. This negative impact would outweigh the potential benefit of closing off views of the land to the rear of the shops. Overall, the Inspector concluded that the scheme would fail to preserve the character and appearance of both the Conservation Area and the street scene in the setting just beyond it, contrary to national advice in PPF15 and the policies of the Structure Plan and the Council's Core Strategy.

The proposed parking arrangements were criticised by the Kent County Council. The Inspector considered they were not sufficient reason in themselves to dismiss the appeal. Nonetheless, they are not ideal and do not therefore reinforce his conclusion that the appeal should be dismissed.

In respect of appeal B the Inspector considered it would be inconsistent with the advice in PPG15 to grant conservation area consent for demolition of the structure in the absence of planning permission for redevelopment of the church site and the certainty that it would be implemented.

Ian Henderson
Acting Chief Solicitor