

07/00005/FUL

CHANGE OF USE TO D1 COMMUNITY USE (PLACE OF WORSHIP)

AT Cintex Building, Featherstone Road, Wolverton Mill

FOR Mr Richard Wightman

(as amended by site plan received 10.01.2007)

INTRODUCTION

The application site lies at the junction of Ridgeway (H1) and Featherstone Road, within the Wolverton Mill Industrial Estate. It is occupied by a double-storey industrial building set within a generous plot of land. The building known as Cintex Building is partially occupied and comprises a ground floor production area (about 1130 square metres) and ancillary office accommodation at ground and mezzanine levels (1090 square metres). Within its curtilage, there is provision for 63 car parking spaces, accessible via Featherstone Road. Greenleys residential area is on the opposite side of Ridgeway. The site is well screened from Ridgeway by mature and semi-mature trees and shrubs.

CURRENT APPLICATION

Consent is sought for a change of use of the building to a place of worship, to be occupied by the New Life Church. There are no external alterations proposed to the building, although the interior could be reorganised to meet the requirements of the applicants. New Life Church are currently based within a purpose built Baptist Chapel in Bradwell Road, New Bradwell.

It is stated in their submission that the church has grown at an average of 28% per annum in the last 5 years. This is a reflection of the national trend, which has seen a 34% rise in attendance at Pentecostal Churches in the last 7 years. The congregation size is currently put at 300 people, who actively and regularly worship at the church. As a consequence, the existing facility no longer meets their requirements, hence larger premises are required.

Aside from the main worship use, there are also several other activities. The nature, frequency and number of people involved are appended to this report.

MAIN ISSUES

The proposal raises 2 main issues as follows:

- The loss of an employment unit and locational considerations in respect of the community facility; and
- Parking issues / traffic generation and the impact on the surroundings

AMENDED PLANS

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Extract Location :

**Cintex Building
Featherstone Road
Wolverton Mill South**

Scale 1:1250

Date: 15th December 2006

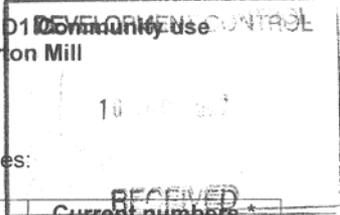
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**Planning Application for Change of Use to D1 Community Use
on Cintex warehouse in Wolverton Mill**



Regular activities

The following table shows our regular weekly activities:

Day of week	Time	Activity	Current numbers*
Sunday	0900 – 1000	Prayer meeting	15
	1030 – 1230	Sunday morning service	200
	1900 – 2130	Evening youth service	50
Monday	1900 – 2200	Band practice	12
Tuesday	0930 – 1145 +	Ladies groups	15
	1900 – 2200 +	Youth Alpha course joint with 6 other churches	40
Wednesday	1900 – 2200	Debt advice service	10
	0930 – 1230 +	Parenting course	15
	1230 - 1630	Debt advice service	4
Thursday	0930 - 2000 +	Alpha course	15
	1900 – 2145 +	Alpha course	25
Friday	1000 – 1200 +	Parent and toddler group	30
	2000 – 2200 +	Youth group	80
Saturday	0900 – 1700	Training course (2 weeks in 3)	50
	c1500 – 1700	Birthday party (most weeks)	40

* but note that most of these activities are increasing at the rate of 25% or more per annum

+ = term time only

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Planning Application for Change of Use to Development Use on Cintex warehouse in Wolverton Mill

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
10 JAN 2007
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Occasional activities

These reflect the current levels of activity, but we do expect the number of events to increase with the larger facility.

Day and time of year	Time	Activity	Numbers who attend
Saturday in late May	1100 – 1700	Community Funday raising funds for street children in the Philippines	250
One Sunday in each of June, July and August	1300 – 1700	Church BBQ	150
Saturdays, roughly 4 times a year	1000 – 2200	Weddings	200
November	1900 – 2330	Charity auction raising funds for street children in the Philippines	200
Last Sunday before Christmas day	1600 – 1800	Carol service	450
New years' eve	2000 – 0100	Church party	150
4 times a year	1900 - 2230	Quiz nights raising funds for a school in Uganda	100
3 times a year	1900 – 2300	Youth concerts	150
One each July and Christmas	1900 – 2230	Youth party	100
4 times a year	2000 – 2400	Evening prayer and worship meetings	75
20 evenings a year	2000 – 2200	Training evenings	30
8 times a year	0900 – 1700	Letting of main hall to Christian organisations for workshops & conferences	120

PLANNING HISTORY

Permission granted by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in early 1991 for the erection of a building for uses falling within Classes B1[c] and B8 (Ref: A1364/1/REX).

PLANNING POLICY

The relevant policies in the Local Plan are:

- E1 Protection of Existing Employment Land
- C1 Location of Community Facilities
- D1 Impact of Development Proposals on Locality
- T10 Traffic
- T15 Parking Provision

CONSULTATION & REPRESENTATIONS

The Chief Environmental Health Officer has no comments.

The Highways Development Control Officer has no objection, subject to conditions on parking and Green Travel Plan.

CONSIDERATIONS

Loss of employment site and locational considerations

Local Plan policy E1 states that planning permission will not be granted for the change of use or redevelopment of any land identified for employment use to other purposes unless there would be no conflict with existing or potential neighbours, and

1. the proposal would result in a significant reduction in the detrimental environmental impact of an existing use, or
2. the proposed use is one that cannot be satisfactorily accommodated other than in an employment area, or
3. the proposed use will not significantly reduce the provision of local employment opportunities.

Taking these in turn, the application site lies within an industrial area and is sufficiently distanced from noise sensitive uses such as residential. It is well insulated in terms of noise containment, is screened from the Ridgeway by vegetation and the access and parking provision also distanced from noise sensitive uses. In relation to its industrial neighbours, the existing building is free-standing and set within a generous plot. Its closest neighbour is some 50 metres away, on the opposite side of Featherstone Road. The land to the north-west of the site is undeveloped.

An industrial estate is not the ideal location for such a community facility which under Policy C1 would normally be granted within or adjacent to a town

or district centre. However, it is considered that the proposed use by its nature and the congregation size could not be easily located elsewhere other than within industrial areas, where there are no constraints in terms of environmental (noise) sensitivity, restricted access and availability of parking spaces.

Prior to the submission of the application, the applicants explored a range of options in terms of suitable premises within the town centre, as required by policy C1. They could find no sites of the size required and with available parking provision in line with the adopted standards. In their search, several estate agents were contacted and at one time, the Working Men's Club in Wolverton came on the market, only to be withdrawn after the Club resolved their financial problems. The Pavilion within the Linford Wood Industrial Estate was also considered, but due to its location, being in close proximity of residential properties, this was not considered a suitable option. Other reserved sites at Old Farm Park and Walnut Tree were considered to be on the other side of town. 80% of their congregation reside in the northern part of town. The applicants also had lengthy discussions with the Milton Keynes Community Foundation regarding the possibility of acquiring one of their reserved sites. The largest site in their possession, on the northern side of town measures about 0.5 acre and this falls significantly below the church's minimum requirement, given their congregation size.

In relation to the impact on the provision of employment opportunities, it is considered that there is no shortage of employment sites in the immediate area. Indeed, there are currently vacant units available to let within Mill Court and units for sale at Blackhill Drive. Marketing efforts to find suitable commercial occupiers for the site have proved unsuccessful. The application site has been on the market for 18 months. The current occupier employs 12 people and given the range of activities the church would be providing, it is anticipated that the number of jobs created would compare favourably.

In view of the foregoing, it is considered that the proposed change of use would neither adversely curtail employment opportunities in the area nor undermine the employment objectives in the development plan. It is recommended that any consent be subject to a condition restricting its use to a church only.

Parking & Traffic Issues

At times of worship, the proposed use would generate more traffic than the industrial use. However, the access to the application site is from Featherstone Road. Featherstone Road is off the Ridgeway (H1), which is capable of absorbing the additional traffic that would be generated by the proposed use.

Given the projected congregation size, a total of 102 car parking spaces would be required, in accordance with the adopted standards. Currently, there are 63 car parking spaces on the site, which is significantly below the requirement. To address for this shortfall, the applicants have indicated that

additional parking can be provided at the rear to meet the required 102 spaces and propose that a range of measures would be employed as part of their Green Travel Plan. These include the use of group pick-ups from designated points with the largest number of their members and encouraging car sharing. It is recommended therefore that conditions be imposed seeking additional parking and the full details of the Green Travel Plan for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning permission be granted solely for a church and subject to conditions on parking and a Green Travel Plan.