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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2025

by **S F Barnes MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 December 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/W/25/3370697**

**Welling Evangelical Church, Balliol Road, Welling, Bexley, DA16 3AQ**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Welling Evangelical Free Church against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
  - The application Ref is 25/00762/FUL.
  - The development proposed is erection of a detached single storey outbuilding to rear.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for Erection of a detached single storey outbuilding to rear at Welling Evangelical Church, Balliol Road, Welling, Bexley, DA16 3AQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00762/FUL, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
  - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings: Location Plan - DA16 3AQ; Block Plan - DA16 3AQ; and 211100317GRS1-11568.
  - 3) No amplified sound, microphones, or public address systems shall be used at any time within the outbuilding hereby approved.
  - 4) Visiting members of the public shall only be permitted within the outbuilding hereby approved between the following hours:  
1900 to 2030 Mondays to Fridays,  
At no time on Saturdays, and  
1100 to 1300 Sundays.

### Preliminary Matters

2. The application form provides the description of development as “The construction of a single storey contemporary garden building to be used as key stage 1 children’s educational room.” The decision notice and appeal form cite “Erection of a detached single storey outbuilding to rear.” As the appeal evidence makes clear that the outbuilding’s use would not solely or predominantly be for children’s education, I have therefore used the decision notice description in the banner above.
3. The Council refused the application for three reasons as set out in its Decision Notice. The second and third of those reasons, which related to noise and disturbance effects for neighbouring occupiers, and on-street parking respectively,

were subsequently withdrawn. Whilst I note the Council's position on these matters, I consider that the noise and disturbance effects for neighbouring occupiers remains a main issue which I need to address.

## **Main Issues**

4. Having regard to the above, the main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
- the character and appearance of the site and the street scene; and
  - the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to noise and disturbance.

## **Reasons**

### *Character and appearance*

5. The site lies to the end of Balliol Road at its junction with the thoroughfare of Upper Wickham Road. An imposing main church building occupies the prominent corner of this junction, with an attached 'hall' extension and car parking area at its return frontage on Balliol Road. Buildings along Upper Wickham Road are a mixture of retail units and dwellings, whereas Balliol Road is predominantly characterised by 2-storey dwellings.
6. The proposal relates to an area of the car park adjoining the position of an existing single-storey detached building. I observed at my site visit that colours used in the finish of that building are complementary to the tone of brick used in the adjacent hall and front boundary wall. Together with its limited scale and massing, its appearance assists with its integration with the street scene. The proposal would replicate both its external finishes and its modest scale. Accordingly, the proposal would result in a unified appearance which integrates acceptably with adjoining buildings.
7. Whilst visible from the surrounding street given the comparatively lower height of the boundary wall, due to the proposal's set-back position within the site it would not be prominent. Moreover, given the taller surrounding buildings, it would only be seen in a limited range of views which would further limit its potential impact. Through its siting, sympathetic materials, modest scale and limited massing, the proposal would have a complementary effect on the surrounding street scene. Even when considered alongside the existing detached building, their combined limited massing would result in a well-ordered and contained appearance, avoiding any sense of sprawl.
8. Overall, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the site and the street scene. The proposal would therefore comply with the relevant provisions of Policies SP5 and DP11 of the Bexley Local Plan (April 2023) and Policy D3 of The London Plan (2021). Those policies, in summary, seek to ensure high quality design that is complementary to the surrounding area.

### *Living conditions*

9. The site adjoins a residential area and is proximate to several dwellings and associated gardens. The appellant's statement has provided additional detail as to how the proposed outbuilding would be used. This includes providing Bible studies classes to up to 15 children whilst their parents attend Sunday services at the

church. At other times, it would be used for purposes such as providing private Bible study and counselling.

10. I am aware that the other detached building, to which this proposal would be proximate, was granted planning permission<sup>1</sup> by the Council subject to a condition relating to its hours of use. The appellant has suggested hours of use for the proposed outbuilding. Whilst more restrictive than those applied to the other approved outbuilding, there is no dispute between the parties that these hours would be acceptable. The limited hours suggested by the appellant have informed, in part, the Council's decision to withdraw its second reason for refusal.
11. I recognise that setting up the room and the carrying out of maintenance by staff may occur outside the proposed hours. However, I consider that it is only the effects of visiting members of the public which are likely to have a potential material impact on living conditions for neighbouring occupiers. Although it would provide additional accommodation, the proposal would occupy only a relatively small part of this site. There is no evidence to indicate that opening hours and noise emanating from the wider Church site are restricted by planning conditions. Moreover, whilst there could reasonably be noticeable noise generated by the intended users of the proposal, this would be contained within very limited hours of operation. There is no substantive evidence before me to suggest such limited use would result in unacceptable noise and disturbance for neighbouring occupiers.
12. For certainty, I consider it would be appropriate to restrict the hours that members of the public can visit the outbuilding and to prohibit the use of amplified sounds or microphones. Taking these factors into account and my observations on site, I am satisfied that the limited nature of the use described in the evidence before me would have no harmful effect on neighbouring occupiers.
13. Concluding on this main issue, the proposal would have no harmful effect on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to noise and disturbance. The proposal would therefore comply with the relevant provisions of Policy DP11 of the Bexley Local Plan (April 2023) and Policy D13 of The London Plan (2021). Those policies, in summary, seek to avoid unacceptable effects of noise and nuisance generating development close to residential uses.

## Conditions

14. I impose conditions largely in the form suggested by the parties. However, in the interests of precision and clarity I have edited and rationalised some of these. In addition to the standard timescale condition, I impose a condition specifying the relevant drawings to provide certainty. As approved plans specify the materials to be used, a suggested condition relating to external finishes would be unnecessary.
15. To protect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, I impose conditions restricting the use of amplified sounds, or similar, and restricting the hours that the building would be open to visiting members of the public. These hours align with those suggested by the appellant at appeal stage.
16. The appellant has suggested that the windows and doors could be kept closed at all times, to limit noise outbreak. Given my conclusions on noise and disturbance above, I find this would be unnecessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Application ref 22/00812/FUL.

## **Conclusion**

17. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal accords with the development plan. There are no material considerations which indicate a decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude the appeal should be allowed.

*S F Barnes*

INSPECTOR