

Comments received from Jehovah Witness' in response to objections raised

Acknowledge very much the concerns of the neighbours in the community. To their knowledge the members are currently driving within the speed limits imposed for the area. If further speed restrictions or calming measures were imposed they would certainly receive full support. The safety to residents, particularly children and elderly is of much genuine concern to the Trustees. Irrespective of the issue here regarding disposal, the members will be requested to remain vigilant and cautious in their approach to the hall. It should be noted that the proposal to increase the internal parking area would assist with matters of safety and address the existing parking of vehicles on the verges. This should markedly improve the visibility within the cul-de-sac. It is proposed to continue to use the existing side entrance but the Highway Authority will determine what is acceptable.

With regards to fencing and not allowing 'all and sundry' to park, they would propose placing a 1.2m high timber post and rail fence 2m from the kerb. This would allow some landscaped frontage. These matters would need to be discussed with the Planning Department with the appropriate consultations and negotiations but feel that these are matters which should not affect the appropriateness of the land purchase itself.

In respect of the flooding concerns, the Jehovah Witness' have consulted with Steve Scothern (NWDC) on this matter and he has confirmed that there is a problem with flooding and is a result of a damaged private drain which runs across the back of the properties in Warren Crescent. It is not a surface water run-off. The existing surface drainage to the meeting hall car park discharges into the adopted sewer within Ernle Road and is not part of the problem. Mr Scothern is of the opinion that our proposals to discharge the extended area of parking via the drainage to Ernle Road would have no impact on the flooding issue. With our proposal there would be no run-off from this extended parking area but would fall back within the site and be taken away by underground drainage which should help with the flooding problem. This issue is addressed as a condition to any planning consent to adequately deal with ground water.

With regards to the area being used as a play area for children, the Jehovah Witnesses were not aware the land is formally designated as a play area and although they sympathise with the residents are of the opinion that not all residents in Ernle Road may want playing of football on the land.

In making a decision, they realise that the Executive will likely feel the need to refer to the planning strategies of the Local Authority to ensure they have support of the legally ratified proposals. The Local Development Framework Core Strategic Objectives state that NWDC is committed to '(SO2) increase the self containment of settlements. Providing the opportunity for people to satisfy their needs for housing, employment, shopping, education, leisure, worship, health and other community facilities and services, locally or in places that minimise the need to travel and are accessible safely and conveniently by non-car modes of travel'. It should be noted that a significant number of members are residents of Ernle Road and immediately adjacent roads. Members are from the community and attend the hall and are also permanent residence in local dwellings. It is their needs also that should be included in any appraisal of the site purchase.

The Jehovah Witness' request that a separation be made between the matters that affect the sale of the land and Planning, Highway and Building Control requirements. They do not feel it would be appropriate at this stage to pre-empt their assessment of the proposals nor to remove their opportunity to do so.