



SYWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Following the Parish Council response the application has been refused. See below.

Planning Response: Sywell Parish Council Meeting Thursday 9th January, 2025.

NW/24/00674/FUL: 112 Overstone Road, Sywell. Northampton. NN6 0AW.

Change of use from Dwelling (use class C3) to church (use class F.1f) with associated parking and landscaping.

The Public Session of the meeting was attended by members of the Plymouth Brethren and village residents. Residents had also voiced their concerns prior to the meeting. The discussion raised the points of concern mentioned below.

Conclusion:

For these reasons, **Sywell Parish Council Objects** to this application and supports the concerns of the residents on the points of parking, loss of privacy, loss of residential property, overlooking, light noise and nuisance particularly from early morning (6am) meetings. Approving the change of use would exacerbate traffic issues, harm the residential character of the area, and fail to deliver meaningful community benefits while introducing environmental risks. The proposal is fundamentally unsuitable for the location and inconsistent with both local and national planning priorities.

Points raised during the discussion:

1. Traffic and Safety Concerns

The development will exacerbate the significant traffic and safety challenges already faced by residents of Overstone Road:

- **Congestion at Peak Times:** Overstone Road is a critical route through the village for residents of Overstone and Sywell, commuter traffic, delivery traffic drop-off's and social activities and experiences of severe congestion. The addition of 35–45 regular attendees and associated vehicle trips will create further gridlock.
- **Overflow Parking Risks:** The proposed 12 parking spaces are insufficient for typical congregational use. Overflow parking onto Overstone Road, where vehicles are already illegally or hazardously parked, will create severe bottlenecks, as evidenced by recent collisions involving parked cars. The 10 rear parking spaces will suffer difficulties in manoeuvrability, particularly the disabled spaces and spaces 12, 11 and 10. Vehicles will need to reverse off site.
- **Safety Hazards:** Increased vehicle movement near a school, cricket club, and existing residential driveways will heighten risks for pedestrians, including children, and drivers. Vehicles entering and exiting the proposed parking lot could lead to accidents on this busy, narrow road.

2. Incompatibility with Residential Character

This proposal undermines the residential integrity of Overstone Road and neighbouring properties:

- **Noise, Emissions and Disturbance:** The influx of vehicles and congregants, especially during evening services, will lead to increased noise pollution, odorous emissions, and

intrusive lighting. The impacts of parking in a rear garden are incompatible with a peaceful residential setting.

- **Loss of Privacy:** The proposed parking at the rear garden will place congregants in close proximity to adjacent homes, infringing on the privacy of nearby residents. Noise, lighting, overlooking and overbearing due to quantity of parked cars.

3. Insufficient Community Benefit

The proposed development fails to demonstrate significant benefit to the broader community:

- **Closed-Community Resource:** The church is intended for a specific group, with no indication of broader accessibility or benefit to village residents.
- **Lack of Justification/Existing Facilities:** Sywell and Overstone already have underutilized village halls and churches capable of meeting similar needs. This duplication is unnecessary and wasteful of resources.

4. Environmental and Infrastructure Concerns

The development introduces substantial environmental and infrastructure challenges:

- **Drainage Issues:** The proposal to replace garden areas with tarmac for parking risks overburdening the existing drainage system. Surface water runoff could exacerbate flooding risks for surrounding properties.
- **Impact on Local Infrastructure:** Overstone Road's aging infrastructure is ill-equipped to handle increased vehicular and pedestrian activity.
- **"The BNG assessment net gain:** The linear habitat net gain is proposed to be provided by planting a new section of hedgerow between the car parking spaces and the fence, although on the block plan there is no gap suitable for a hedge in this location. Given the narrow nature of the site, leaving at least 2m for a new hedgerow would mean there isn't sufficient space to incorporate the proposed car parking, therefore this proposed gain has to be discounted due to being unfeasible."

5. Factual Discrepancies and Misrepresentations

The application contains inaccuracies and inconsistencies that require clarification:

- **Trip Generation:** The assertion that the development will reduce trips is incorrect. A single residential household generates fewer trips than a church with several weekly services, potentially hosting up to 45 attendees.
- **Additional Traffic:** Church groups generally welcome visitors which will increase the congregational numbers, funerals and other events. Those visitors may arrive in larger numbers for celebrations which will add to the concern about parking of more small or larger vehicles.
- **Noise Impact:** Claims of "no adverse noise impacts" conflict with the expected congregation size and vehicular movement, which will undoubtedly elevate noise levels.
- **Boundary Misrepresentation:** The application incorrectly describes property boundaries and fails to account for the location of existing structures and drains.

6. Policy Considerations

- **National Housing Shortage:** Repurposing a residential property for non-residential use undermines government efforts to address the housing crisis.

- **Local Development Policy:** Existing facilities such as the Overstone and Sywell village halls align better with Policy 11, which prioritizes community-focused developments over redundant or divisive projects.