



Plans to Rebuild Calne Baptist Church

An historic church in Wiltshire is to be demolished after plans for a new one were given the green light at a highly-charged planning meeting.

Calne Baptist Church on Castle Street will be replaced despite emotional objections from residents at the meeting on April 26.

The older parts of the church date back to 1817 but because the church has had modern extensions it is not a listed building.

The new church will be around a metre taller with 150 seats, which is fewer than the current one. A new café will be attached to the church and new toilets will be built.

The plans were approved but only just - with the chair of the planning committee casting the deciding vote.

One resident who feared the new café and church will attract more people was so choked up about the proposal, she had to hand her speech to another neighbour to read it.

It said: "The outside toilet will cover the surrounding houses with lingering disgusting smells. "I moved here for a quieter home. My property will be devalued because it will lose its peace and tranquillity.

"I wake up with nightmares of seeing the place I know not there."

She also feared her privacy will be taken away because people who sit in the café will be able to see into her garden.

On top of this she said food waste from the café will attract pests and destroy the fresh air. One of the main objections was over fears of parking shortage to support the plans.

Residents argued the large number of comments in favour of the application showed many would use the new church and there are only 20 spaces available.

There were also objections based on the historical value of the building and the damage the works might have on near-by walls.

But it was eventually approved after councillor Tony Trotman cast the final vote as he thought the plans looked “exciting”.

The benefits listed in the council report were that the new church will provide “larger, better quality community spaces for events, a café, toilets and improved parking provision, including cycle storage and EV charging points.

If the new plans had failed, the applicants had said they will have to find a new place of worship. It was argued that whatever might end up replacing the Baptist church could end up being worse in the long run.

Swindon Advertiser, 28 April 2023
Original Article by Jude Holden