

Briefing Note



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Subject: Safari Cinema, Harrow

Safari Cinema, Harrow – Relocation Strategy

Introduction

This document is the **Abridged version of the Relocation Strategy** supporting the planning application for the Safari Cinema site in Harrow. It describes the assessment of alternative sites without identifying particulars.

There is a companion **Unabridged version of the Relocation Strategy** which contains the confidential particulars about the alternative sites identified.

Purpose of the report

As part of the Stage 1 Referral report, the Greater London Authority (GLA) set out a requirement for further information on the relocation of the congregation currently based at the site. Paragraphs 17 and 18 of the GLA Stage 1 Referral report states:

“The applicant has highlighted that the existing church congregation is drawn from a broad geographical area, and on this basis has identified five potential alternative sites which may be suitable for the existing church to be relocated to between 5 and 20 kilometres away from the existing site. Whilst the identification of alternative sites is welcomed, no detailed analysis has been provided on the feasibility or suitability of relocating the existing church functions to any of the identified sites.”

“In the above policy context, and in the absence of a commitment to re-provide the existing church community uses on the application site, a detailed relocation strategy must be provided for the existing church use prior to enable the GLA to confirm the acceptability of the site’s redevelopment. Both the strategy and its implementation must be secured through conditions of approval and s106 obligations attached to any approval.”

This Relocation Strategy sets out the background to attempts to engage with the Victory to Victory Community Church (V2V Church); the criteria the applicant has assumed when looking for alternative sites; and a strategy for assisting and supporting the the V2V’s Church’s relocation from the Safari Cinema site at 2 Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2TU (“the Site”).

The applicant maintains that the 2010 Equality Act relates to a public sector

duty on the London Borough of Harrow to *consciously consider* the impacts of development on vulnerable groups. As such, it is considered that the GLA's suggestion that the applicant is legally obliged to re-house V2V Church at alternate premises represents a misinterpretation of the Act.

However, in the spirit of working collaboratively with V2V Church and minimising the impact on their operations as a result of the proposed redevelopment of the Site, the applicant is submitting this Relocation Strategy and further, has sought to present a number of different options for the location of a place of worship within the surrounding area, thereby addressing the GLA's requirements as per Policy 3.16 of the London Plan and S1 of the draft London Plan.

The Relocation Strategy is accompanied by the following appendices:

Appendix 1 – Details of correspondence with the V2V Church; and

Appendix 2 – Photographs showing the existing space used by the V2V Church at 2 Station Road in Harrow.

Characteristics of the Existing Congregation

The amount of detailed data about the congregation of the V2V Church has been constrained by the limited amount of information supplied by V2V Church, despite repeated attempts by the applicant to make contact via email and phone, as well as indirect engagement via property agents acting on behalf of the applicant. **Appendix 1** provides further details on this correspondence.

Consequently, this assessment has been informed by alternative sources of information on the composition and distribution of the V2V Church's congregation, most of which are summarised in this document.

In terms of estimating the size of the congregation, our estimates were initially based on information provided by the planning consultancy, Icen Projects, in their Transport Statement in support of the Church's 2014 planning application for the conversion of the former Gala Bingo Hall.

The Transport Statement sets out an expectation of the congregation size increasing to 400 once sufficiently established in the premises at the Site. This was reflected in the conditions of the Church's planning permission, which limits the congregation size to 400. Consequently, sites which could reasonably accommodate 400 attendees have been selected.

Condition 2 of the Church's planning permission also requires the 2014 Transport Statement to be updated in 2019. Our understanding is that this condition has not to date been satisfied and so there is no up to date information provided by the Church about the modes of transport used by congregants attending the Church.

Whilst the size of the congregation could be somewhat reliably estimated via information in previous planning applications and several site visits by the applicant and its professional team on days of service conducted between the 19 May and the 30 June 2019, the geographic spread of the congregants' home locations is less easily estimated. The 2014 Transport Statement sets out that of 200 respondents to a survey on the mode of transport used to travel to the church, all but 11 travelled by car, public transport or a bus service, rather than cycling or walking, suggesting that many congregants do not live within a reasonable walking distance of the Site.

In terms of more detailed information on location, in the absence of other evidence, the listed addresses of objectors to the applicant's planning application and uploaded onto the Council's planning portal were mapped and analysed. These are shown in Figure 1 below relative to rings showing 5, 10 and 15km radii of the Site.

Figure 1 – Address of objectors to the planning application (2019)

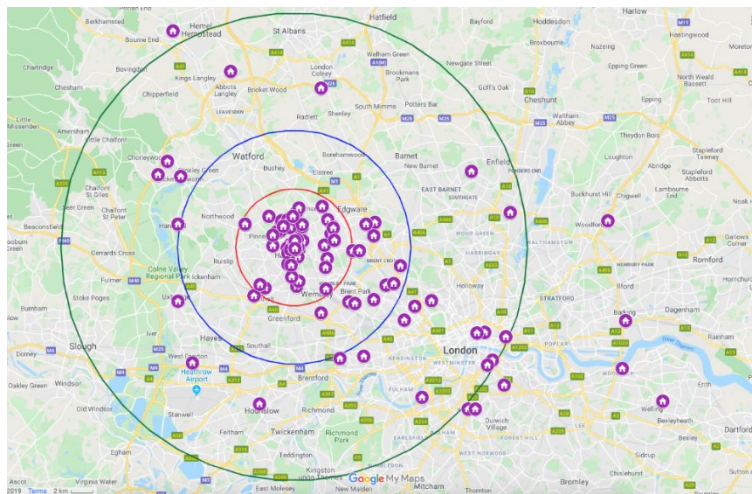


Figure 1 shows that a high proportion of objectors listed their address as within 5km of the Site. However, a significant share of respondents lived further afield, with a number of respondents listing their addresses as being outside of London or in areas of Central, East and South London.

The distribution of objectors to the proposal complements information presented by Iceni Projects in their 2014 Transport Statement.

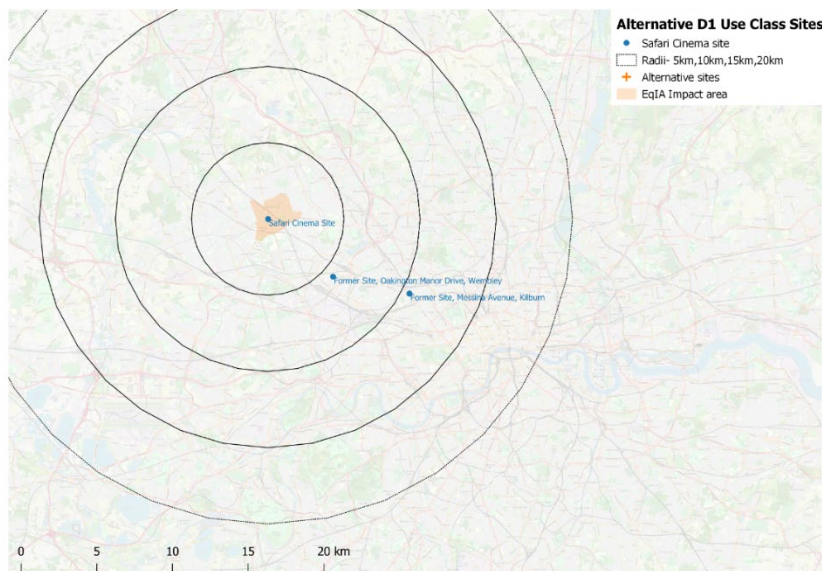
In the absence of other evidence, the Relocation Strategy assumes that the distribution of objectors reflects the geographic distribution of V2V Church's congregation.

Previous sites occupied by V2V Church

The Relocation Strategy also notes that the V2V Church has moved from two former sites in the past.

The two former sites, at Oakington Manor Drive in Wembley, and Messina Avenue in Kilburn, are approximately 6km and 11km from the current Site respectively, as illustrated in Figure 2 below. The significance of this is that the V2V Church has already moved location before, and yet has clearly survived; its operation has not been compromised.

Figure 2 – Former sites occupied by V2V Church



As will be illustrated later in this Relocation Strategy, the alternative sites identified are all within a similar distance to that which was experienced when the V2V Church relocated in the past.

Site Selection Criteria

It is important to first identify the criteria against which possible relocation sites should be judged, as part of this Relocation Strategy.

In addition to sites being available for sale or rent as of December 2019, there are eight other criteria which the applicant considers appropriate to apply when identifying and assessing potential relocation sites.

The site selection criteria are set out below.

Distance from existing site

The congregation currently operate out of the premises at the Site. Despite the evidence for a relatively dispersed congregation set out above, and bearing in mind the V2V Church's historic sites, ensuring that new sites were within a reasonable and commutable distance of V2V Church's current base was an important factor.

Accessibility

In the absence of very detailed information on the addresses or mobility requirements of existing members of the congregation, the applicant has sought out sites which are easily commutable via public transport and car from multiple different locations.

In order to assess the extent to which a site is "accessible", we have used Transport for London's established accessibility metric of Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL). The PTAL system assigns a score for every 100m square grid of London, ranging from 0 to 6b (with 6b the "most accessible") informed by factors such as walking time, reliability of transport mode, the number of services available within the catchment and average waiting times.

However, there are instances where a site might have a low PTAL by virtue of having inaccessible surrounding areas. Similarly, given that PTAL is a London-wide metric and access to public transport is considerably better in Inner London than Outer London, average scores of 2 to 4 in Harrow or other outlying areas also need to be considered relative to their local context. Therefore, in instances where a site might have relatively good levels of public transport accessibility, but a low PTAL, the two pieces of information have been presented together.

It should also be noted that the V2V Church apparently runs a local shuttle bus for its congregants, thereby further improving the accessibility of the Church regardless of location.

Capacity/ square footage

The portion of the Site which is currently rented by V2V Church encompasses a total Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 1,563 sqm (or 16,813 sq ft). The site search has been informed by the size of the existing premises.

It is estimated that the maximum size of the congregation is closer to 200 at the most popular service times. It is also noted that the existing space may be considerably underutilised given the size of the congregation. This is supported by the significant provision of storage space and empty rooms in the existing building, some of which have broken windows and/or filled with storage boxes, and which have therefore been assumed to not be in use. **Appendix 2** provides a series of photos illustrating this.

As such, while we have assumed a congregation capacity of 400 as per the most recent planning permission, smaller sites were considered in instances where the site fulfilled all other selection criteria.

There is no agreed standard multiplier for calculating church capacity per person. For the purposes of this Relocation Strategy, we have assumed a minimum of 17 square feet per person, which Lifeway.com have cited as being a reasonable rule-of-thumb for Southern Baptist Churches (a similar denomination to V2V Church). This would equate to circa 6,800 sq ft based on a maximum congregation size of 400.

Number of Parking Spaces

While the current Safari Cinema does not provide dedicated parking spaces for its congregation, it has been assumed based on site visits on days of service and other evidence set out elsewhere in this report, that a significant portion of current congregants travel via car to their place of worship. Therefore, while not clearly an absolute requirement (the Site itself has no dedicated parking for the V2V Church), parking capacity has informed the strategy and the site assessment.

Cost

The current occupants of the Safari Cinema are paying a total of £85,000 a year as of December 2019. However, the site has not been revalued in several years and independent assessments of the rentable value have put the estimated market rental price at closer to £120,000 and potentially higher.

Throughout this assessment, sites have been sought which charge broadly similar annual rates to what V2V Church are paying at present. Similarly, sites which are available to rent rather than to purchase have been prioritised, given that V2V Church currently rent the site at 2 Station Road and may be likely to rent other sites.

In addition to cost, we have considered whether moving into the proposed premises is feasible given the lag time between the publication of this Relocation Strategy and its actual implementation. Therefore, it is relevant to consider whether a property is still on the market and could theoretically be purchased by a buyer other than the applicant.

Level access

Given that disabled congregants can access the premises at the Site via a level entrance, this is considered to be an essential criterion for any alternative site.

Kitchen and classroom space

The applicant understands that a kitchen would be an essential requirement of any alternative location. As such, all sites considered in this report either

currently have a pre-existing kitchen or would be easily adaptable to incorporate a kitchen.

Similarly, the applicant understands that classroom space for religious instruction is also required. Along with kitchen space, we have included sites which may not currently be configured to accommodate such activities but can be easily adapted for these purposes and would have additional capacity beyond the minimum needed to accommodate a congregation of 400.

Visibility

V2V Church is currently based in a highly visible location which lends prominence to the V2V Church's operations, given its position on a moderately busy shopping street and an A Road.

The prominence of the Site is an asset which has been borne in mind when considering alternative sites from which the V2V Church can operate.

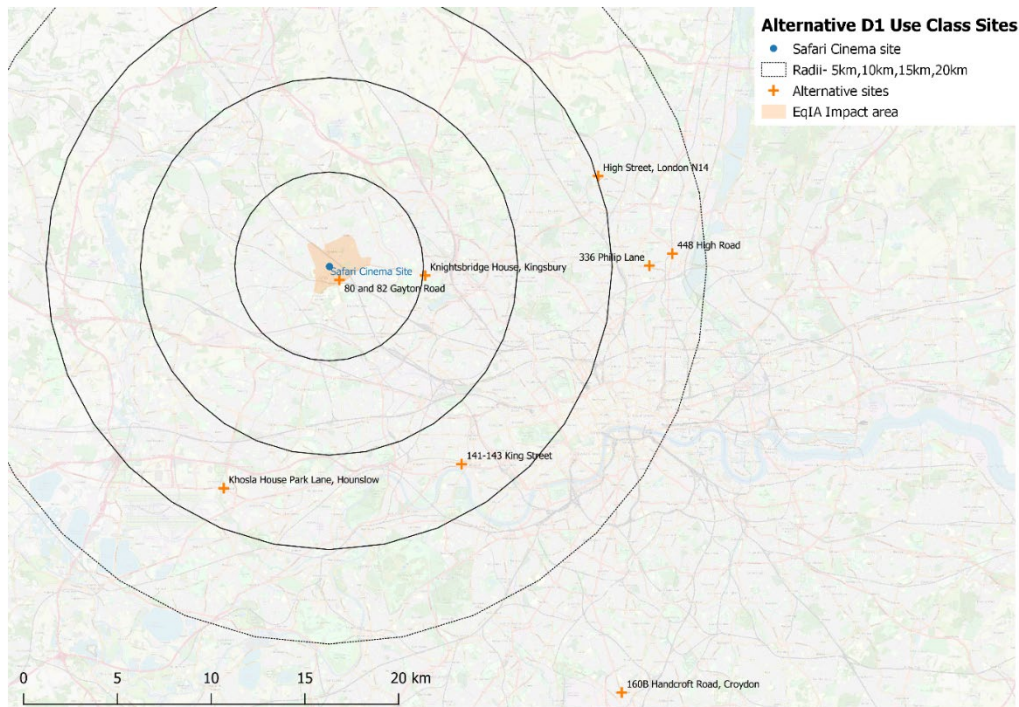
Site Search

Previous Site Search

A preliminary site search was undertaken in mid-2019 as part of the research for the equality impact assessment (EqIA) submitted with the application, during which seven alternative sites were identified.

Those sites are set out in Figure 3, relative to the Site, the boundary of the local ward and 5, 10, 15 and 20km radii from the centre of the Site.

Figure 3 – Alternative D1 Sites relative to 2 Station Road: first search



Seven sites were identified, all of which currently were classed for D1 uses and were of a sufficient size to accommodate a medium-sized church. These were submitted with the application.

Given that all of the proposed sites (aside from one) are no longer on the market, further detail of these sites is not set out in this Relocation Strategy. Instead, additional sites have been identified.

Current Sites

A second exercise was undertaken in November and December 2019, to identify additional alternative sites.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality and to ensure that current negotiations as regards to several of these sites are not compromised, the specific addresses of these sites have not been set out in this (abridged) version of the Relocation Strategy.

Instead, the applicant includes in this document an assessment of each of the four sites against the criteria described earlier in this strategy.

The identity of these sites will be confirmed to the Church post the grant of planning permission for the applicant's proposals, via an unabridged version of this Relocation Strategy.

Significant efforts were made to identify sites within the area immediately neighbouring the site at 2 Station Road. Four local agents were approached. The site selection criteria were explained, as was this strategy. At least two of the agents are known to the Church and understand and appreciate that the criteria being applied are appropriate.

Each of the sites has been assessed via the criteria set out previously in this document.

Site Evaluation

Site 1

Capacity/ square footage

The available space lies on the first floor of a former office building.

The available space encompasses 5,026.32 sq ft (467.87 sqm).

Accessibility

The site lies slightly over 5 kilometres away from the Site. The fastest driving route between the site and the current site of V2V Church at the Safari Cinema is via a distance of 3.7 miles or an estimated 14-minute drive according to Google Maps.

However, the site has relatively high levels of public transport access, with a PTAL score of 4. This is high for a suburban location and reflects the fact that the closest underground tube station is located within a four-minute walk from the site. That tube station is on the Piccadilly Line.

In terms of access via bus, six routes are within a less than 300 metre walk of the site, enabling direct access to another five (overground / underground) train stations.

Number of Parking Spaces

There are two car parking spaces available at the site.

Cost

The property is available to rent on a new lease for £60,000 per annum.

The site is still currently on the market as of 30 December 2019.

Level access

It is confirmed that the site does have level access.

Kitchen space and classroom space

The first floor of the property is currently configured to include a dedicated kitchen area and WCs, which are used as storage at present. It is also conceivable that the space can be configured to accommodate a dedicated classroom space, with partition walling.

Visibility

The site is located on a major road running through the area, and neighbours a local higher education facility, as well as warehouse retail and low-rise residential units.

Other

The site is currently classed as B1 for office and commercial uses, but is currently being marketed as being suitable for D1 and D2 uses. In order for it to be used as a place of worship, temporary or permanent change of use would need to be secured through a planning application at the point of acquisition.

Site 2

Capacity/ square footage

In September 2017, plans to convert the ground floor from factory use to D1 uses as a "Temple with community centre" were granted. However, the temporary permission expired on 31 December 2019 and would need to be renewed.

The site encompasses a total floorspace of 7,500 sq ft.

Accessibility

The site is within 4.6 miles of the Safari Cinema. This is a 15-minute journey according to Google Maps. A journey between the site and 2 Station Road is estimated by Google Maps to take 45 minutes and would involve a combination of underground tube and bus travel.

The site is an 8-minute walk away from the closest underground station on the Central Line and a roughly 22-minute walk from another underground station on the Piccadilly Line. Despite its proximity to an Underground station, the site's accessibility is not reflected in its PTAL rating of 1a.

The site is within a 500-metre walk of a bus stop which is served by a major bus route connecting several towns in the local area. Other buses are located

further afield.

Number of Parking Spaces

There are only a small number of parking spaces available at the site. However, evidence presented in the Planning Statement accompanying the application for the site's change of use to a Temple suggested that the applicant was able to come to an arrangement with a nearby retailer, whereby a significant number of spaces would be made available specifically to congregants on one day a week. Equally, additional parking capacity was provided at the nearby underground station car park, which was under-capacity at that time.

Cost/ Market Status

As of December 2019, the listed cost of the site was £96,000 per annum (or £8000 per month) with room for negotiation.

Level access

A condition of the 2017 planning permission was for the development to be fully accessible to disabled worshippers, as well as for the provision of two disabled car parking spaces. As such, the site can accommodate disabled worshippers without further renovation needed.

Kitchen space and classroom space

There is a sufficiently large amount of total floorspace for dedicated kitchen and classroom space to be provided at the point of purchase.

Visibility

The site does not lie on a main road or in a particularly prominent location. However, the site has been in use as a temple for the period 2015 to 2019, with temporary permission extended in 2017, which suggests that its location works well for a place of worship.

Other

The site is still currently on the market as of 30 December 2019. However, the property has a strong chance of being acquired by Asprea 2 Ltd, who are currently in talks with the freehold owner.

Site 3

Capacity/ square footage

The site encompasses a total of 21,300 sq ft (1,979 sqm) of space. Of the total, 10,721 sq ft (996 sqm) comprises ground floor warehouse space, 5,284 sq ft (491 sqm) is first floor office space and 5,295 sq ft (492 sqm) is second floor

office space.

The current owner has confirmed that they would be happy to sub-divide the property, thereby allowing the applicant to rent the required space rather than buy the whole property.

Accessibility

The fastest route by car between Safari Cinema and the site is roughly a ten-minute drive according to Google Maps, or a 2.3 mile walk. This is comfortably within a 5km radius of the Safari Cinema site and therefore likely to be within a reasonable commuting distance of its existing congregation.

In terms of access to public transport, the site lies within an area with a PTAL rating of 3. This is relatively high for an Outer London location. In addition to being well-served by buses, the site is an approximately ten-minute walk to the closest London Overground station. That station lies on the Euston to Watford line and is one-stop away from an interjection with an underground station on the Bakerloo Line.

In addition, the site is within a 600-metre walk of bus stops which are served by four buses, which connect the site to locations including four underground / overground stations, three bus stations and a retail centre.

Number of Parking Spaces

The premises include a car parking area which covers a total of 17,000 sq ft, which could accommodate up to 70 cars.

Cost/ Market Status

The likely annual rent is yet to be finalised, though would be in the region of £20 per sq ft for a partial rent of the building. The advertised freehold price of the property was set at £3.3 million and rent was set at a rate of £15 per sq ft per annum for the entire property as of mid-2019.

Level access

The property has disabled access from the road.

Kitchen space and classroom space

The space is of a sufficiently large size and configured in such a way that it would be feasible to introduce such dedicated spaces.

Visibility

The site is located on a moderately busy road connecting the site to an overground station. The surrounding uses are varied, with the site neighbouring

a large self-storage facility, a High School and several low-density residential units.

Other

The site is currently in use as a business unit warehouse with office space and is not currently classed as D1. A change-of-use application would need to be submitted at the point of the site's acquisition in order to enable its use as a place of worship.

Site 4

Capacity/ square footage

The site covers two floors of a large mixed-use corner site.

The site comprises a mixed-use building containing ground floor retail and an adjoining courtyard cover structure which was previously in use as a storage facility, encompassing a total of 2,455 sqm space over two floors.

Draft, exploratory plans for conversion to church use suggest that the church could take at least circa 1,200 sqm of the ground floor space with part of the remaining area given over to ancillary uses such as kitchen and education space.

Accessibility

The site lies just within a 5 km radius of the current Site. This is a 16-minute drive of 3.8 miles via the most practical route according to Google Maps.

The site lies within an area with a calculated PTAL rating of 2. This is a low score, but average for much of Outer London. The closest London Underground station is 0.8 miles or approximately a 16-minute walk away, and is on the Jubilee Line, which enables relatively easy access to Central London, Wembley and the Safari Cinema site. The next closest station to the site is a 28-minute walk away.

In terms of accessibility by bus, the site is within a 350-metre walk of bus stops for five bus routes, which between them provide links to the surrounding area, as well as further transport links (an overground train station).

Number of Parking Spaces

There is relatively limited capacity for car parking to the front of the building, with enough space for a maximum of 5 or 6 cars to be accommodated.

Cost/ Market Status

The site is currently controlled by the applicant and an appropriate rent could be agreed (i.e. comparable to the rent currently payable by the Church in relation to the Site).

The site is currently not being advertised.

Level access

The current building could be easily adapted, with level access to enable easy access by disabled congregants.

Kitchen space and classroom space

The building is currently configured in such a way that it can be adapted to include dedicated kitchen and classroom space.

Visibility

The site is prominently located at the intersection of two local main roads. Equally, of the two buildings on the site, the relevant building is a visual, local landmark.

Other

From discussions with the relevant council, the applicant understands that the council were not in opposition to the site being adapted to alternate uses. As such, it is not unreasonable to assume that planning permission for change-of-use could be secured for a portion of the site so that it could be used to house a place of worship.

Conclusions

This Relocation Strategy identifies nine criteria against which any potential alternative site should be assessed. The applicant has applied these detailed evaluation criteria and presents four potential sites in this Relocation Strategy, all of which would meet the relocation requirements of the V2V Church. This is in addition to the seven sites identified as part of the initial planning application when it was submitted in July 2019.

It is proposed that the Relocation Strategy for identifying alternative premises for the V2V Church would be set out in the Section 106 agreement that the applicant will enter into with the Council prior to the grant of planning permission. The Relocation Strategy would oblige the applicant to engage with the V2V Church and, in accordance with this Strategy, apply the selection criteria (modified in any relevant way by agreement with the V2V Church) to identify a site to which the V2V Church can relocate.

In addition to being obliged to comply with the Relocation Strategy and to assist

and support the V2V Church in identifying a relocation site (by assessing possible relocation sites against the criteria set out in this document (or as amended by agreement with the V2V Church)) the applicant is willing to offer the following:

- 1) A one-off financial contribution (up to £100,000) towards fit-out costs;
- 2) A one-off payment towards the legal expenses associated with the Church's relocation (up to the sum of £10,000);
- 3) The provision of planning advice to secure any change of use where required; and
- 4) A payment for the first year of rent irrespective of the location of the new premises (up to £100,000).

Summary

This Strategy fully meets the requirements of the GLA Stage 1 Referral report for a detailed Relocation Strategy for the V2V Church.

The Relocation Strategy provides the following:

- A detailed assessment of the suitability for use by the V2V Church of four alternative sites based on nine separate evaluation criteria which best meet the assumed requirements of the Church;
- Reasonable certainty about the future availability of the alternative sites given that two of the four sites are in the control of the applicant;
- A clear and binding commitment from the applicant to assist and support the V2V Church in its relocation and to comply with the Relocation Strategy as part of the Section 106 agreement that the applicant will enter into with the Council prior to the grant of planning permission;
- A generous and bespoke package of support, both financial and in kind, from the applicant which is intended to facilitate a smooth transition for the V2V Church to its new premises; and
- An ongoing commitment from the applicant to work in a supportive and collaborative manner with the V2V Church in order to identify and secure alternative premises which best meet the needs of the Church and its congregation.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 – Details of correspondence with the V2V Church (to ascertain details that would inform the selection criteria and to discuss a relocation opportunity).

From: Emma White <emma@elwplanning.com>
Sent: 23 May 2019 10:43
To: v2vchurch@aol.co.uk
Cc: Andrew.Darwin@keystonelaw.co.uk; neil.curbison@colmancoyle.com; Roger Pittalis <roger@pittalis.co.uk>
Subject: FAO Pastor Douglas Goodman - reference, Safari site

Dear Pastor Goodman

As you are aware, my clients are preparing their planning application to be submitted in relation to the Safari Cinema site on Station Road in Harrow.

As part of that preparation, they are keen to understand a little more information about your church's use of the physical space at the church premises in Station Road (I am aware that you have a significant on-line presence), so that the impact of the redevelopment proposal can be considered comprehensively and accurately.

As such, I should be very grateful if you would please provide the following information:

1. The range of sizes of your church congregation i.e the range from the largest to the smallest;
2. The distances that congregants typically travel to come to your church;
3. How congregants travel to your church.
4. The composition of the congregation (i.e. how many are families, elderly, younger people) and the approximate proportion in each category;
5. The range of activities offered by your church and the range of those activities offered at the church premises and the activities offered at places other than the church premises;
6. Whether access is provided for disabled people and the number of disabled congregants;
7. The hours that the church building is open;
8. We understand that a bus is available to collect congregants. How big is this bus, where does it collect congregants from, when does it operate and how many does it typically collect?
9. How many people are employed by your church, working at the church premises and are these positions full time or part time?

I should be grateful if you would provide the following information to be received please by [5pm on Friday 31 May 2019](#). I envisage that the information requested above should be easily to hand for you and your colleagues at the church.

I look forward to hearing from you

Many thanks.

Regards

Emma

From: Emma White
Sent: 31 May 2019 12:02
To: v2vchurch@aol.co.uk
Cc: Andrew.Darwin@keystonelaw.co.uk; neil.curbison@colmancoyle.com; Roger Pittalis <roger@pittalis.co.uk>
Subject: Re: FAO Pastor Douglas Goodman - reference, Safari site

Dear Pastor Goodman

I am conscious that I have not had a reply either from you or from Mr Curbison or an acknowledgment that my email has been revived, though I had an out of office from Mr Curbison. He was not in the office on the day my email was sent.

We requested that you provide the information set out in my email of last week by 5pm today. I'm hopeful that the information we have requested is easily to hand for you and your V2V colleagues and I look forward to hearing from you in the next few hours.

Regards

Emma

December 2019

As well as the above correspondence, 5-6 attempts were made to contact the V2V Church by an agent over 8 days in December 2019, with a view to discussing possible relocation opportunities. No response at all was received.

Appendix 2

Appendix 2 – Photographs showing the existing space used by the V2V Church at 2 Station Road in Harrow



