



The Greek Orthodox Community of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr
Charity Number 1144751

Planning Policy,
Cheshire West and Chester Council,
The Portal, Wellington Road,
Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BA

13th February 2025

Subject: Overleigh Cemetery Development Proposal as part of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to contribute to the Handbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan, particularly in relation to the potential development of the Overleigh Cemetery area and its integration with the Orthodox Christian Parish of St Barbara, located at Overleigh Cemetery, Overleigh Rd., Handbridge, CH4 7HW. I believe that our proposal, as it is outlined below, contributes to the “achievement of sustainable development”, one of the fundamental conditions for the Neighbourhood Plan’s approval.

As the Overleigh Cemetery (South) contains two buildings that could be repurposed for the church’s ministry (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), I would like to outline potential uses and request that the Cheshire West and Chester Council support their renovation to enhance community engagement and sustainable development. Our proposal aligns with the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines published in Dec. 2023 by AECOM and the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan published in Nov. 2024 by the Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum. Both documents were circulated by the Council as part of the eight-week consultation initiated in Dec. 2024, and emphasises heritage conservation, community integration, and sustainable development.



Fig. 1: Gardeners hut at Overleigh Cemetery (South)



Fig. 2: Methodist chapel at Overleigh Cemetery (South)



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Our proposal for the use of the two buildings is as follows:

1. **Office and Community Outreach Hub:** The gardeners hut (Fig. 1) could serve as an administrative office and a community outreach hub. This space would provide i) A base for clergy, charity trustees and church board, as well as volunteers to coordinate our liturgical services, events and charitable initiatives, ii) A venue for pastoral care, offering guidance, counselling, and support to parishioners and individuals in need, iii) A heritage and information centre, detailing the history of Overleigh Cemetery, Orthodox Christianity in Cheshire, and the role of the Church in the local community, and iv) A meeting place for community-building activities.
2. **Refectory and Activity Space:** The Methodist chapel (Fig. 2) could be transformed into a refectory, providing i) A communal dining area for parishioners and visitors, promoting hospitality and fellowship, ii) A kitchen facility for preparing meals, particularly for outreach programmes that assist the homeless and those in need, iii) A space for educational workshops, cultural events, and Christian study sessions such as catechism, and iv) An accessible and welcoming venue for local gatherings, thereby strengthening community ties.

To bring this plan to fruition, support from the Cheshire West and Chester Council would be invaluable. Specifically, we would like to request that the Council consider the following actions in their vital role to support and enhance local community engagement and sustainable development.

- a) **Funding and Grant Applications:** Assist our Parish in securing heritage and community development grants to fund structural repairs and interior refurbishments.
- b) **Planning Permissions:** Facilitate planning permissions to allow for renovations that align with the Neighbourhood Development Plan, prioritising community-led sustainable development and historic preservation.
- c) **Infrastructure Support:** Improve access to the cemetery and church facilities, including pathways, lighting, signage, and bicycle racks to enhance safety and usability, integrated in the sustainable travel network (Map G in the Neighbourhood Development Plan).
- d) **Heritage Conservation:** Collaborate with conservation experts to ensure that renovations respect and complement the historical significance of Overleigh Cemetery while making the buildings functional for modern needs, as outlined in the design guidelines.
- e) **Community Partnership Development:** Encourage partnerships with local organisations, including educational institutions, social services and community support groups, to maximise the use of these renovated spaces in line with community engagement goals.

We believe that this proposal aligns with the objectives of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan by contributing to sustainable development, preserving historical assets, and fostering community engagement. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these ideas further and explore ways in which the Council can assist in their realisation.



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Please keep us informed of the Council's decision and future progress of the development plan. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your favourable response.

Yours in Christ,
Theodoros Papadopoulos

On behalf of the Greek Orthodox Community of St Barbara the Great Martyr

Email: [REDACTED]

Mobile phone: [REDACTED]

Parish website: <https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/>

Charity website: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/5022743>