

Consultation Response from KC Conservation and Design
2019/93284 Clayton West United Reformed Church, Church Lane, Clayton West, Huddersfield, HD8 9LY
Alterations to convert former church to 6 dwellings
Date Responded: 02.12.19 | Responding Officer: Sue Oakley | Responding Ref:

Clayton West URC is an unlisted former chapel on a hillside location within the village of Clayton West, appearing from historic maps to date back to the mid C19. This building is constructed from hammer dressed stone with a slate roof and front and rear gables. The façade is a significant feature of the building with a pair of slender pinnacles at eaves level and symmetrical gothic arched windows, a pair of arched head doors typical of non-conformist chapels and a circular window at high level. All openings have ashlar stone surrounds with hood moulds and carved corbels and all windows have slender frames. At the front of the chapel is a low stone boundary wall with a pair of decorative gate piers and ornate wrought iron gate. This building is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

The side elevations are simpler, again in hammer dressed stone with gothic arched windows with slender frames and ashlar surrounds. The rear gable is the most prominent in the landscape as it is visible along the valley, and this elevation is a simple hammer dressed stone wall with few openings and a single storey extension.

The interior of the building is simple in design with a gallery although all of the fixtures and fittings of interest have been removed. A community room is located on the lower ground floor with a barrel vaulted ceiling supported on simple cast iron columns.

The applicant proposes to convert the chapel into six dwellings which would require the subdivision of the internal spaces. Although this would result in the loss of the significant spaces the context has already been lost with the removal of the fittings. If possible any remaining historic features should be incorporated into the proposal to reflect the historic use of the building.

With the exception of the rear elevation, the external fabric of the building will remain predominantly unaltered, although the existing windows will be replaced with anthracite grey uPVC windows and with grey composite doors on the side and rear of the building. A number of new window openings are proposed in the rear elevation and these are simple in design and I do not consider these to harm the character of the building. They should be set into ashlar stone surrounds to match the existing windows on this elevation.

I would prefer all new window frames to be slim in section to minimise their bulk and retain the character of the building, particularly on the façade, and I would suggest that window details should be submitted for approval prior to manufacture.

Although the use of uPVC is proposed for the windows, I consider that if these are well detailed the harm to the exterior of the building and its contribution to the character of the area will be minimal and the benefits of bringing the building into a sustainable and viable use will outweigh this slight harm. The building will remain visible on the skyline and will be clearly understood as a former chapel from its external appearance.

The building became vacant and was put on the market by the church in 2019, demonstrating that its use as a chapel was no longer viable. As the building will be brought into a sustainable and viable use with the external appearance and character substantially retained, I support this proposal subject to the comments above.