



Ms Kate Mansell  
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Direct Dial: 0191-2691240

Our ref: L01187810

26 March 2020

Dear Ms Mansell

### **Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015**

**PARKWOOD METHODIST CHURCH, PARKWOOD ROAD, LONGWOOD,  
HUDDERSFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE HD3 4TT**

**Application No. 2020/90480**

Thank you for your letter of 11 March 2020 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

### **Summary**

The grade II listed Parkwood Methodist Church sits on a raised platform behind the imposing grade II listed Parkwood Mills complex and the rows of workers houses, with the listed mill owner's house in the far background. The chapel, with its skewed position and parallel east terrace rising over the mill's large pond, plays an important role within the views of this part of the valley and Longwood Edge Conservation Area. The proposal is for the conversion of the building to residential use and involves its subdivision in to twelve apartments and conversion of the grounds to the east and north to accommodate related parking. Although we are supportive of the principle of change of use of the building, in its current form and given the lack of justification for the chosen design and potential for less invasive alternatives, the harm is not currently outweighed by the benefits. We consider the proposal fails to meet the requirements of paragraphs 192, 194 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework and consequently recommend it is withdrawn or else refused.

### **Significance of the listed building**

Perched on a small promontory at the bottom of the valley formed by the Longwood Brook, the grade II listed Parkwood Methodist Church is a distinctive building within Longwood Edge Conservation Area. Built in 1868 by Wesleyan Reformers who seceded from the nearby Wesleyan Methodist Church in Lamb Hall Road, the building



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sits on a raised platform behind the imposing grade II listed Parkwood Mills complex and the rows of workers houses, with the listed mill owner's house in the far background.

The chapel, with its skewed position and parallel east terrace rising over the mill's large pond, plays an important role within the views of this part of the valley and conservation area. The survival of this group of buildings and the ability to visually appreciate the relationships between them are extremely important to understand the life of the people who worked, lived and worshipped here, being also illustrative of the booming woollen industry that flourished in West Yorkshire towns at the time and the important role the Methodist mission played in these areas. The relevance of this chapel for the community who lived here is reflected in its extension in 1897 and in the building of a new Sunday school to the north soon afterwards. The terrace to the east of the chapel and grounds to the north were used as a burial grounds and remembrance garden. The chapel retains much of its original fixtures and fittings, being largely intact and in continued use for worship until its closure last year.

### **Impact of the proposal on the significance of the listed building and conservation area**

The aim behind the proposal is to find a new use for the building which ensures its long term conservation needs. The proposal considers the conversion of the building to residential use and involves its subdivision in to twelve apartments and the conversion of the grounds to the east and north to accommodate related parking.

Although we are supportive of the principle of change of use of the building, the harm derived from its conversion to multiple residential uses will have a strong negative impact upon its significance. Relatedly, the parking required to serve these units, particularly the slots located on the east terrace, will be disruptive within the important views of the conservation area in which the church is experienced alongside the mill's buildings, pond and workers houses.

The proposed scheme does not take into account the significance of the building, its architectural detail and qualities of its internal space. The introduction of a standard layout over three floor levels will blur the hierarchies between the more functional – but still strongly symmetrical - lower ground level and main chapel level, being also disruptive on to the double height windows and sense of space of the chapel through its subdivision on two levels. The introduction of two identical staircases at opposite ends throughout the building will alter the sense of hierarchy and progression from the main south entrance to the altar, organ and main pews. Finally, the proposal involves changes to windows and doors which will have a cumulative impact on to our ability to appreciate how the building was originally organized.



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## Planning Policy Considerations

The statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting and any features of special interest (s. 16, Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) must be taken into account by your authority when making its decision.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places this desirability to protect and enhance our historic environment at the core of achieving sustainable development. In terms of enhancement, the NPPF goes further by requiring local planning authorities not only to preserve but to look for opportunities to enhance and better reveal their significance (paragraph 200) and to take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 192). The proposal for converting the chapel to residential has the potential to introduce a new use and ensure the long term conservation of an important building within the conservation area and so could meet these criteria.

Paragraph 194 states that any harm of any level requires clear and convincing justification, with great weight being given to the conservation of the heritage assets in question, and paragraph 196 goes on to say that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

We recognise the adaptation of places of worship for high impact uses – such as residential – proves particularly challenging, as the loss of public access, fragmentation of the space and loss of fixtures and fittings required for its adaptation can have a strong negative impact upon its significance. As a starting point, a strong justification should be made that conversion to full residential uses is the optimum viable use for the building and that commercial or community use is not a realistic alternative. If residential use is justified, there are alternative layouts which would be more sympathetic to the special characteristics of the building than the present one – for instance, considering duplex apartments could leave the windows uninterrupted; a central access to the apartments on the main floor could, to a certain extent, retain the way the space was originally organised, to cite some potential options.

Consequently, as it currently stands and given the lack of justification for the chosen design and the potential for less invasive alternatives, the harm is not currently justified or outweighed by the benefits.



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## Historic England's Position

The reuse of the listed building is a public benefit and we acknowledge that conversion to residential could be the only option to make the development viable. Considering the harm resulting from the loss of public access, loss of fixtures and fittings, and impact of the parking on to the conservation area, we ask that you are convinced that this type and intensity of development is required as part of the justification required by paragraph 196 of the NPPF. This could be ascertained through a development appraisal for example.

Further mitigation can be offered through a more sympathetic design of the internal layout and external arrangements, understanding the role this building plays within important views of the conservation area, and recommend this is pursued and considered. Conversion to residential of places of worship is achievable, and with the right scheme it is possible for the benefits to outweigh the harm.

The local authority and applicant may find the following guidance useful when considering the impact of the proposal on both the aesthetic and historic interest of the building: New and Additional Uses for Places of Worship. It can be accessed on the following link: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/new-uses/>

## Recommendation

Historic England objects to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of paragraphs 192, 194, 196 and 200.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice please, contact us.

Yours sincerely

## Rosa Teira Paz

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