

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

(NINE UNITS)

AT

FORMER LINTHWAITE METHODIST CHURCH

CHAPEL HILL

LINTHWAITE

HUDDERSFIELD

HD7 5NJ

APRIL 2022

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been produced to support a planning application for the conversion of the former Linthwaite Methodist Church into nine residential units

The proposed scheme is across four floors of the building, with two units on the lower ground floor, three units on the ground floor, three units on the first floor and one unit on the second floor. The former garden area will provide car parking (ten spaces).

This Statement should be read in conjunction with other information submitted to support the application, including (but not limited to) a Heritage Impact Statement, a Structural Survey, and a Viability Assessment.

2. Site and surroundings

The site comprises a former Methodist Church which is situated on the eastern side of the junction of Chapel Hill, Waingate, and Stones Lane in Linthwaite. There is a former garden area adjacent to the building that is at a lower level than the adjacent highway (Waingate).

The building lies in an area that is predominantly residential, with the “new” Linthwaite Methodist Church nearby on Stones Lane, which has an associated former Sunday School building. There is undeveloped land, including woodland and a beck, to the east.

The building is Grade II Listed (full details are contained within the Heritage Impact Statement).

“Methodist chapel. Dated 1867. Hammer dressed stone with ashlar dressings. Pitched stone slate roof. Stone brackets to gutter. 2 storeys and basement. Continuous first floor still band. 6-bays long by 4-bay pedimented front. Ground floor windows are segment headed. First floor

windows are round arched, those to side elevations with impost band. The central bay breaks forward slightly and has 2 round arched, 6-pannelled doors within cambered heads. Cornice area is supported on 4 console brackets with Foliated base. At first floor level is paired round arched window. Single lights to each side, both floors. Large tablet in tympanum reads in raised capitals: METHODIST CHURCH ERECTED 1867 Stained glass to north elevation window basement level contains flat.”

The site also lies within the Linthwaite Conservation Area. There is an Area Tree Preservation Order just outside the site boundary to the east and the site is adjacent to the Wildlife Habitat Network.

3. Site history

A pre-application enquiry was made to the Council with regard to the potential conversion of the building to residential and a response received dated 1 March 2023.

There were a number of withdrawn applications for conversion to residential use in 2005/2006 but the most recent approval was for planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the conversion of disused place of worship and caretakers' flat to office and storage facilities for internet music sales (2006/93296 and 2006/93464).

4. Planning policy

National planning policy and guidance is set out in National Policy Statements, primarily the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance Suite (PPGS), together with Circulars, Ministerial Statements and associated technical guidance. The NPPF constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and is a material consideration in determining applications.

- Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development - The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development... achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent. These are economic, social and environmental objectives, as identified in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.
- Chapter 4 - Decision-making - This highlights the importance of early engagement (pre- application discussions) as this has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system for all parties (paragraph 39 of the NPPF). It highlights the importance of submitting the right information with any subsequent planning application, particularly where formal assessments are required (paragraph 43 of the NPPF).
- Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places - The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. A list of what planning policies and decision should ensure is set out at paragraph 127 of the NPPF.
- Chapter 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change - the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future.
- Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment - heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other relevant national guidance and documents include -

- MHCLG: National Design Guide (2021)
- DCLG: Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (2015)

Relevant development plan (the Kirklees Local Plan) policies are held to include -

- LP 20: Sustainable Transport
- LP 21: Highway safety and access
- LP 22: Parking
- LP 24: Design
- LP 27: Flood Risk
- LP 28: Drainage
- LP 33: Trees
- LP 35: Historic environment

The following are relevant Supplementary Planning Documents or other guidance documents published by, or with, Kirklees Council -

- Highways Design Guide SPD
- Housebuilders Design Guide SPD
- Waste Management Design Guide for New Developments (2020)
- Linthwaite Conservation Area Appraisal

5. Appraisal

5.1 Principle of development

With regard to the proposed scheme in relation to designated heritage assets, the pre-application response stated -

The scheme must be proportionate in terms of its conservation and preservation of the asset, the impact of the design upon this significance, and the future viability of the building, and this needs to be clearly demonstrated.

With regard to such heritage matters, these have been considered by the Heritage Impact Statement, which concludes that -

Overall, this report assesses that the proposals will lead inevitably to some loss of historic fabric and consequently to a loss of character. The proposals will, however, provide a long term solution to the continued deterioration of the fabric, while bringing human activity back to this most social of buildings. Therefore, it is considered in NPPF terms that the proposals will result in Less Than Substantial Harm (at the mid-point of this category) to the significance of the Listed Building and to the Conservation Area. The proposal are also considered to accord with the second relevant part of Local Policy LP 35 – Historic Environment.

The pre-application response also set out a number of factors for consideration in terms of demonstrating the “future viability” of the building -

Evidence of how the building has been marketed, who the marketing has been targeted towards, and for how long;

Full details of the marketing of the building are contained in the Viability Assessment report submitted with the application but the site has been marketed for at least three years by two different commercial agents. There have been no approaches in terms of a continued commercial use

or any other community-type uses and the only approaches that have been made have been for residential conversions to a number of dwelling units (and not for a single dwelling).

Why the building cannot be mothballed or used for a 'meanwhile' use until the market picks up if this is the case;

The property is held to be in Class B8 storage use (for the purposes of the GPDO), and as the building is listed, there are no permitted development rights for a change to any other use without planning permission. As such, any "meanwhile" use would require planning permission, which could mean that any required changes to another use could potentially look to detrimentally alter the fabric or layout of the building, depending on what specific use was proposed.

It is presumed that the "market" referred to is the commercial market or the community uses market. Whilst the pandemic has affected commercial considerations in a hugely negative way, there are signs that commercial activity is beginning to slowly recover but this is patchy and only in certain sectors. In terms of commercial uses, the following uses are considered to be the only reasonable commercial uses to which the building can realistically be put -

Class B8 use (a continuation of the existing use) - whilst the building is now used for storage, there have been no approaches for any other Class B8 activity whilst the property has been marketed.

Class E uses - Commercial, Business and Service

a) Shop other than for the sale of hot food

Any proposal here would likely fail the retail Sequential Test, as the property is out of centre

b) Food and drink which is mostly consumed on the premises

Similarly, any proposed restaurant or cafe use would also likely fail the retail Sequential Test

c) the following kinds of services principally to visiting members of the public

i. financial services

ii. professional services (other than medical services)

iii. any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality

These are also uses which would normally be found in a town centre (any office use would require a Sequential Test) and the layout and condition of the building does not lend itself to such uses.

d) Indoor sport and recreation (not swimming pools, ice rinks or motorised vehicles or firearms)

It could be possible to use the building for indoor sport and recreation, or for a number of other community-based uses. However, the nature and condition of the building does not lend itself to a commercial hire use and it would require investment in the condition of the building to even allow for such low-charge uses.

e) Medical services not attached to the residence of the practitioner

Again, the layout and condition of the building does not lend itself to such uses

f) Non-residential creche, day centre or nursery

There is likely to be no demand for such a use, given the close proximity of Jellies Day Nursery (in the current Linthwaite Church complex) and Linthwaite Clough School and the nature and condition of the building does not lend itself to a commercial hire use.

g) i) office ii) the research and development of products or processes or iii) any industrial process, (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)

Any office use would require a Sequential Test and it is likely that the use of the building for any industrial processes would likely compromise the fabric of the building.

In terms of community-type uses, these do not tend to generate significant income streams and the cost of repairs and refurbishment of the existing building (nb the problems of the roof, as set out in the Structural Survey - see below) would mean that the property could not viably be let as a community use. In any event, there are a number of existing community uses within Linthwaite and the Colne Valley, not least in the current Methodist Church nearby on Stones Lane which has Jellies day nursery, Scouts, Zumba, and Yoga, as well as a large hall available for hire.

With regard to “mothballing” the building until the market “picks up”, then the existing structural condition of the building impacts significantly on this approach. The Structural Survey report (see below) concludes that the building requires urgent structural remedial work. The cost of such work, which has been factored into the Viability Assessment, would make it difficult to “mothball” the building without some form of income from it. There is also no indication as to when any “market” might “pick up”. The fact remains that this is a property that is in need of timely remedial work which is only like to accrue if a permanent use can be found for the building in the very near future.

A viability assessment detailing the least harmful option and justifying the level of intervention necessary to secure the future of the building.

Such a Viability Assessment has been provided by Brookline Lansdowne to support the application. This report concludes that -

“From the figures as per the appraisal within this report, it is clear that subdivision of the building is essential for it to become a viable proposition. Furthermore, it is also clear that achieving 9 no units only just achieves what is deemed to be an acceptable market return for a project of this nature”.

As residential values are generally higher than values for other uses (save for retail, which could not be achieved here due to the retail Se-

quential Test), then the proposed development scheme is considered to represent the only financially viable option for this building.

Therefore, clear evidence has been provided which demonstrates that “less harmful” uses are not financially viable and that the space is not capable of being retained in its current form or with less subdivision.

Dependent upon the level of harm identified the Council may require an independent quantity surveyor or development surveyor to assess/verify any viability/marketing appraisal submitted as part of a future application (and this is likely to be recharged to the applicant);

This is within the purview of the LPA.

A condition survey or structural report with information on the vulnerability of the building and costs associated with necessary repairs;

A full Structural Survey report has been prepared by Marsh Design to support the application. This report concludes that -

“It is our opinion that the buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction; believed to be structurally sound, and we can see no areas of major concern. That they can be converted into a habitable dwellings, with moderate structural remedial works carried out during the proposed conversions”

However, the report also concludes that -

“If structural remedial works are not undertaken in the immediate future then the roof structure is at risk of collapse which would cause major structural damage to the whole fabric of the building.

Overall, and in consideration of the nature and wide variety of uses, the buildings are in dilapidated condition, although there are specific structural defects which are identified and If no structural remedial works are undertaken then the property will be put on the “at risk” register”.

Therefore, it is clear that the property requires significant structural remedial works in the near future and that these works are only likely to be forthcoming if a permanent use can be found for the property in the near future.

A proposal must be sensitively designed to retain historic features and architectural details as far as possible, both internally and externally, including access, parking and bin storage. Where details and areas of significance are removed, altered or hidden, this must be justified in line with planning policies including the National Planning Policy Framework. Any harm will require clear and convincing justification and must be minimised as far as possible and mitigated against where it is unavoidable.

The existing windows will be replaced by new metal framed units with opening lights. It has been necessary to replace the existing windows for the following reasons -

The Southern facing windows are metal framed, single glazed units with no opening lights. They do not provide the thermal performance or ventilation requirements to meet Building Regulations standards and will limit the achievable EPC rating. The proposed replacements are similar in style with slim frames.

The Northern facing windows have timber sub-frames which are rotten. They too are single glazed with limited ventilation openings. Repair is not considered economically viable and it would be preferable to install ones to match the other replacement windows.

Two of the existing windows will be relocated as an internal light-box feature in the shared lobby. The opening lights in the new windows will enable better air circulation and ventilation within the building. The front doors will be retained and selected pews will be re-modelled to go in the entrance area if possible.

A detailed and comprehensive Heritage Impact Statement has been provided by AB Heritage which concludes that -

“The proposals will, however, provide a long term solution to the continued deterioration of the fabric, while bringing human activity back to this most social of buildings. Therefore, it is considered in NPPF terms that the proposals will result in Less Than Substantial Harm (at the mid-point of this category) to the significance of the Listed Building and to the Conservation Area. The proposal are also considered to accord with the second relevant part of Local Policy LP 35 – Historic Environment”.

Therefore, it is considered that heritage matters have been fully considered in line with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy LP35.

5.2 Design

Amount

The proposed development will convert the building into nine apartment units spread across the available four floors, with two units on the lower ground floor (one one-bed and one two-bed), three units on the ground floor (all two-bed), three units on the first floor (all two-bed), and one unit on the second floor (two-bed).

Ten parking spaces will be provided on a newly-constructed car park in the grounds of the property.

Layout

The proposed units will be arranged across four floors, with access to the building for units on the lower ground floor from existing access points to the south and the east. Access to two of the units on the ground floor will be from the original front door access to the building to

Stones Lane, with access to the rear unit being from an existing access to the rear of the building. Access to the first floor units will also be from the original front doors to the building via an internal staircase, which will also serve the unit on the second floor. Refuse storage areas are provided to the side of the building near to the road.

In terms of residential amenity, the proposed residential units meet and exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards as per Principle 16 of the Housebuilders Design Guide SPD.

The majority of windows in the proposed development have a good outlook and do not give rise to any issues of mutual overlooking of nearby properties. However, the north-facing windows are in close proximity to the site boundary and, in some cases, to the end gable wall of 29 Chapel Hill. At lower ground floor, the living room and bedroom to one unit will have a very restricted outlook and receive little light because their windows would face north. The windows in the northern and western elevations (other than on the lower ground floor) will retain patterned or frosted glass that would obscure views so as to avoid compromising the privacy of neighbouring residents through overlooking, especially, of the rear garden of 29 Chapel Hill and its side-facing ground floor window. However, it should be noted that these are existing window openings and cannot be changed due to heritage issues.

Rooms with obscure glazing will have little outlook and some of those in the northern elevation would also experience limited natural light ingress. For the reasons set out above in terms of viability, the subdivision of the building into nine units in this manner has been shown to be the only practical way of bringing the building back into a viable use and the layouts of the units, whilst less than ideal, is the best reasonably practical option.

Access to the proposed car park will be via a new ramp from an existing gated access point. Ten parking places are proposed. The car park will be bounded by soft landscaping and tree planting.

Scale

The scale of the building will not alter, as no extensions etc are proposed.

Landscaping

The site will be landscaped around the proposed car park, with adequate protection of the protected trees off-site to the east. The car park will be constructed of permeable block paving. Soft landscaping will bound the car park area to the north and native species planted where appropriate.

Appearance

The external appearance of the building will not change, save for the new car park in the former garden area and proposed window replacements as detailed above. The rear steps will be re-modelled.

Use

The nature and character of the area is predominantly residential, and so the proposed use for residential is considered to be entirely appropriate.

5.3 Access

Access to the proposed car park will be from Waingate, with the car park at a lower level than Waingate and served by a new access ramp. Ten parking spaces will be provided. Access to the site is shown in detail on submitted plans.

Electric vehicle charging points will be provided, as well as internal cycle storage.

6. Other matters

Drainage

There will be no impact on the existing culvert. Foul drains will be connected to the existing and there will be no alteration to existing surface water. The new parking area will have permeable paving.

Trees

An Arboricultural Impact Statement (AIS) indicates that the proposed scheme will necessitate the removal of six Category C (low quality) trees but a total of eight new trees will be planted to offset this loss. Other trees will be adequately protected in respect of the proposed new car park.

Ecology (bats)

A bat survey has been submitted with the application which concludes that -

“The building has been assessed as being of low roosting potential and therefore, a single emergence survey should be carried out by a qualified ecologist using at least two surveyors to cover the building. If bats are found not to be using the building, then it is unlikely that there will be any impact to bats from the proposed conversion. There will likely be no loss of existing roost sites or habitat and no fragmentation of habitat caused by the development”.