

Consultation Response from KC, Conservation & Design**2023/92343 Wooldale Methodist Church, Wooldale Road, Wooldale, Holmfirth, HD9 1QJ****Change of use, partial demolition of building and wall and alterations to convert redundant chapel to dwelling (Listed Building within a Conservation Area)****Date Responded: 19.3.2024****Responding Officer: Sue Brooks****Responding Ref: HO 13/440**

Wooldale Methodist Church is a Grade II listed former chapel situated in the heart of the Wooldale Conservation Area and originally constructed in 1830 with a later addition from 1880-90. The original part of the building (the schoolroom) was used as a community space before its closure and this single storey wing is constructed in hammer dressed stone with arched timber framed windows, a stone entrance porch and a stone slate roof. The windows have been replaced and flat roofed rear and side extensions have been added.

At the southern end of this, at 90 degrees to the original building, is the chapel and vestry. This is a more substantial building constructed in coursed stone with a prominent ornate pedimented gable facing Wooldale Road. On this elevation are large arched head and round timber framed windows with coloured and decorative glass, with less ornate windows on the other external elevations. The original plan form survives, and many internal fittings survive including raked pews, organ, pulpit and timber panelling.

The application proposes to convert the building into a single 4-bedroom dwelling with associated alterations. The associated listed building consent application 2023/92344 has been submitted and the internal alterations are assessed separately as part of that application.

*Assessment**Principle of conversion*

The chapel closed in recent years due to a declining congregation and the building was put up for sale by the Methodist Church. The heritage statement explains the process the Church went through, and it is apparent that there was no interest in retaining the chapel in its current form. Based on the information submitted, we accept the principle of converting the building into residential use, with a single dwelling a reasonable option which should minimise the level of subdivision and change. The elements of the conversion are assessed below.

External fabric

Externally, the applicant proposes the following works:

- Installation of conservation rooflights on the north pitch of the chapel and west (rear) pitch of the schoolroom. Following negotiations, the number of rooflights has been reduced to minimise impact on the building, with three towards the rear of the building and one near the front gable of the chapel on a prominent roof pitch. This is an acceptable intervention which will provide natural light and ventilation within the new upper floor space with a low impact on significance.
- Solar photovoltaic panels are proposed on the rear roof pitch of the schoolroom. This pitch is clearly visible from Whitehouse Farm to the rear and the cottages adjacent to the farm, but not from more prominent aspects or the public highway. As this is a secondary elevation the harm to the significance of the listed building will be low, subject to the array being installed on top of the existing stone slate roof covering and not integrated, as this would require the removal of historic fabric and will make reversibility difficult when the solar panels become redundant. The

Conservation and Design Team has no objection to the principle of solar PV panels on this roof slope and would recommend details are submitted by condition.

- Installation of a flue on the south elevation – details have been submitted and are acceptable as the flue is located towards the rear of the building.
- Replacement of plastic rainwater goods with cast-iron. This is acceptable subject to profiles, colours and fixing methods matching the existing cast iron rainwater goods.
- A free-standing air source heat pump is proposed in the rear garden and is acceptable in this discreet location.
- Demolition of the flat roofed rear extension. We welcome the removal of this late 20th century addition which harms the character and significance of the listed building. Its removal will reveal surviving historic fabric and provide amenity space to the rear of the building. The rear wall of the schoolroom has been removed in the past to create an open plan space with sliding doors, and it is proposed to insert bi-fold doors in this opening. Following demolition, it is also proposed to reinstate the original finish to the external walls. This is acceptable subject to details of the proposed doors and external wall finishes being submitted for approval.

Landscaping and boundary treatments

The following works are proposed:

- The removal of a section of front boundary wall is proposed to create a parking space. This includes the relocation of the curved section of low wall which is adjacent to a Grade II listed telephone box. The extent of demolition is acceptable as this provides off-street parking in an area of the village where parking is difficult, and the proposed driveway is in a discreet location to the side of the chapel.
- Stone walls and iron railings are proposed for the boundary treatments, with Victorian style railings proposed and shown on the elevation drawing. Evidence shows that there were historically railings on the front boundary, and we welcome the reinstatement of a traditional architectural detail.

Policies

The proposed development would directly impact on statutorily designated heritage assets (the Grade-II listed building and the conservation area). Therefore, it must be considered in the context of the provisions of Sections 66 (1) and 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF, the Kirklees Local Plan and the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Plan.

Section 16 requires special regard to be paid to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Any harm requires clear and convincing justification and needs to be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal.

Overall, the proposed scheme is considered to lead to less than substantial harm which has not been fully justified. Recommendations are made in the sections above to reduce this harm, and we feel that these will result in an acceptable proposal once amendments have been made, subject to conditions.

Externally, the changes are relatively minor. The replacement and repair of windows will be controlled by condition, rooflights are kept to a minimum, and the flue and solar panels are set away from the principal roof pitches.

Partial demolition of the boundary wall to create off-road parking to the side of the building leads to slight harm to significance. This is outweighed by the reinstatement of traditional railings along the front boundary wall and the provision of parking in a discreet location off the road.

Overall, the proposed scheme is considered to lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of Wooldale Chapel by the change of use into a dwelling with internal and external alterations. This is outweighed by the public benefits of providing a sustainable and viable use for this vacant building with a well-considered conversion, and addressing maintenance issues which will prevent further deterioration of the building fabric.

The proposal leads to slight harm to the character of the conservation area and setting of the adjacent listed telephone box by the partial demolition of the boundary wall and conversion of the building to a new use. However, it enhances the setting and character by reintroducing traditional railings, addressing deterioration, and bringing a vacant building back into use. Wooldale Chapel makes a strong contribution to the special interest and significance of the conservation area and, following conversion, its former use will remain legible. This will allow the non-conformist history within the village to be understood and help to protect its special character and sense of place.

Conclusion

The Conservation and Design Team accepts the conversion of the building into a single dwelling as this will provide a viable and sustainable use for a redundant chapel and will ensure the continued repair and maintenance of the building.

We accept that some changes are necessary to make the conversion viable and feel that the proposal has been adequately justified, subject to conditions recommended in the associated listed building consent application.