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The former Methodist Chapel , Steelmoor Lane, Barton-le-Willows, York YO60 7PD

Proposed change of use to form three bedroomed dwelling with on site parking, vehicle turning and garden / amenity area.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

1.0. The site and history.

- 1.1. The building is located on a corner site of restricted area on the south side of the village green in the centre of the village Conservation area for Barton le Willows. It faces northwards on to the green which is designated as a visually important undeveloped area as part of the previously adopted Ryedale Local Plan. The site comprises the original area curtilage of the chapel together with an enclosed area of former orchard land immediately to the south of it.
- 1.2. The chapel building dates from 1904 and is built in an attractive Arts and Crafts style with fine detailing, some of it in red terra cotta work. The building retains its original stained glass leaded light windows, terracotta opening surrounds, ventilation hoppers and original joinery work.
- 1.3. The building consists of the main chapel which has an unusual internally timber clad barrel vaulted roof, under a high steeply pitched roof. Ancillary rooms including Sunday school room and service rooms which are collected on the west side of the building under lower and narrower roofs of similar pitch. All sections of roof have overhanging eaves with exposed painted rafter feet, barge and fascia boards. The imposing main front entrance door faces northwards on to the village green.
- 1.4. The building is constructed in light buff brick with brick buttresses. It is decorated with contrasting red brick quoins, with terracotta surrounds to doors and windows, which are also subdivided by decorative terracotta mullions. The roof is clad in dark red plain tiling. The main chapel has simple but attractive leaded light stained glass, in muted green/orange/yellow.
- 1.5. The site is restricted in area, but larger than for most chapel properties, in that there is a variable width space, on average of 1 – 1.5 metres width around the outside the building, with a larger space at its south eastern corner rear to the service entrance. There is also currently a very large steel heating oil tank in the east facing site frontage. The site is enclosed by mature hedges on all four sides. These are mostly mixed species of Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Pyracantha. The garden area to the south of it is currently enclosed on four sides by mixed native species hedge. The total application site area is 0.053 hectares in area.
- 1.6. The chapel was closed for worship approximately two years ago.
- 1.7. An application for planning consent was made by a potential purchaser / developer in June 2014 to convert the building to a five / six bedroom house. (Ref: 14/00524/FUL). This necessitated the insertion of an additional floor to form a two storey dwelling, resulting in the addition of numerous roof light windows to light the new upper floor rooms. This application was refused for reasons of over development, resulting in windows overlooking nearby properties, unsympathetic

window replacement, undesirable subdivision of the spaces within the building, lack of sufficient parking for a large house and general damage to the original character of the building.

- 1.8. A further planning application was made in August 2015 for change of use to form a three bedroomed house. This application did not include the area of former orchard land to the south of the chapel and was withdrawn owing to concerns by the Highway Authority Area surveyor that vehicle turning could not be provided within the chapel site, and highways safety could therefore be prejudiced. (Planning application ref 15/01020/FUL). Discussions have since taken place with the owners of the adjacent enclosed land who are happy for it to be included with the application site. This area of land is vacant and not currently attached to any other dwelling.
- 1.9. The chapel building has been available officially on the property market for more than 15 months.

2.0. The Proposal.

- 2.1. It is proposed to convert the property to a single residential dwelling with three bedrooms. It is proposed to retain the existing chapel worship area as a single unbroken space, keeping its barrel vaulted roof as a single unbroken visual statement and retaining the existing folding glazed doors on its west side to light a new internal bedroom corridor in the subsidiary western wing.
- 2.2. It is proposed to convert the School Room and service wing to form three double sized bedrooms, bathroom and w.c. cloak room. The existing vertical sliding sash windows will give sufficient ventilation to these rooms to comply with current regulations. Their thermal performance can be increased by the use of internal secondary glazing units.
- 2.3. The existing cellar / plant room which is 1.5 storeys high, was originally designed as a combined coal and boiler house and can be converted to form a utility room and plant room accommodating a biomass / pellet boiler with fuel storage below. The storage can be accessed for delivery through the existing external hopper located near the rear door, which was previously used for coal delivery. This will mean that the existing prominently sited oil storage tank outside the building can be removed and all fuel storage contained within the building. Installation of a renewable form of energy into the building is a sustainable alternative.
- 2.4. An important feature of the proposal is the retention of the existing stained glass windows in the principal living area. To achieve the necessary increased thermal rating, internal clear secondary glazing panels will be installed. It is proposed to retain the existing ventilation hoppers, however as these do not give sufficient opening area to ventilate the whole space to the required level it is proposed to install a mechanical 'whole house' ventilation system which will ventilate this single space without the need to destroy the character of the existing leaded light windows by attempting to make them openable.
- 2.5. The individual bedrooms will be ventilated naturally via the existing vertical sash windows or new matching double glazed versions where these need replacement.
- 2.6. A parking area for two cars along with a turning area and area of garden land can be created to the south of the building. In order to create the necessary visibility along the highway road in both directions, the existing front boundary hedge will be removed and partially replaced or set back behind an agreed visibility splay. Vehicles leaving the site can do so in forward gear. Removal of the frontage boundary hedge

adjacent to the chapel has the benefit of exposing its side wall and creating a more clearly visible feature in the landscape.

3.0. Proposed landscaping and parking.

- 3.1. It is proposed to form two parking spaces to the south side of the house keeping the access as far north as possible to create the maximum visibility on the site frontage. This will result in the creation of a new access into the site and creation of a new verge crossing. The frontage boundary hedge will be removed in order to improve visibility, as described in paragraph 2.6.
- 3.2. It is proposed to finish the surface of the new parking area in permeable jointed buff/stone coloured block paving, sample to be agreed. The edge of the paving to be marked with a continuous drainage channel drained to a soakaway to prevent surface water run-off on to the highway in the position shown on the proposed plan.
- 3.3. It is proposed to retain all the remaining boundary hedges which are either mixed thorn species or plain Hawthorn. It is proposed to retain the existing shrubs, mainly Laurel bushes adjacent to the front entrance door.

4.0. Access Matters

- 4.1. As already described it is proposed to create a new vehicle access on to the highway together with two parking spaces and a vehicle turning area. This area will be hard paved to provide a suitable wheel chair usable surface connecting to level access into the dwelling.
- 4.2. The existing rear entrance into the building nearest to the parking area is currently level. It is intended to retain this as a wheel chair or accessible entrance.
- 4.3. The plan of the proposed dwelling is fully wheelchair accessible, being all on one floor and with at least one level entrance, nearest to the vehicle parking area. The proposed bathroom is large enough to accommodate a wheelchair friendly layout and all the bedrooms and living area are generously spaced. The proposed dwelling would be ideally suitable for a wheelchair bound or semi- ambulant person.

5.0. Ecology.

- 4.1. A report accompanies this application. Bat species have been identified as being present in the roof space. Disturbance should not be a problem as the proposed works do not affect the roof covering. It should be possible to carry out the proposed scheme without necessary disturbance, however attention is drawn to the section of the report which refers to action which must be taken if the roof covering is removed.

6.0. Local Occupancy Matters:

- 6.1. Barton le Willows is categorised as a non-service village under the currently adopted Local Plan Strategy for Ryedale. If the Local authority are minded to grant consent for this proposal it is requested that conditions which would normally be imposed for limiting occupancy to local residents and workers should be suspended for the reasons listed below.
- 6.2. The property has been marketed since July 2014, as being available to purchasers for general development purposes, subject to planning approval, through a local Estate Agency handling both commercial and development properties. The property has been advertised as having been suitable for conversion to either business or residential use. In

spite of a high level of interest during indifferent market conditions, no sale has been taken forward.

- 6.3. The suggested guide price is reasonable and certainly not excessive, taking account of the occupancy restrictions on the residential market. It has also been displayed on Right Move's national residential database, so the property has therefore been offered to the widest possible market and no serious offers have been made. A number of offers have been made on the property but no sale has been concluded. None of these have been from potential local occupiers. There is ample recorded evidence that buyers are willing to pay the market price for the building.
- 6.4. A letter from the Estate Agent is included as part of the application documentation attached to the application giving details of numbers of interested parties. Also included is a copy of the Estate Agent's particulars. To date no successful sale has come to pass in spite of over 40 enquiries and more than 15 formal viewings. Feedback from viewers collected by the agent cites the restricted occupancy policy making the project impractical for investment because of the uncertainties of obtaining mortgages given the nature of the building and the potential imposition of the local occupancy condition on any residential permission.
- 6.5. The building is large and an additionally expensive project to undertake, if the necessary specialist systems are to be employed to conserve it in its present form, retaining the external character and the character of the internal spaces. Potential purchasers / developers and mortgage lenders need to know that their investment is likely to be worthwhile, with a good possibility of being sold on in the future.
- 6.6. The building has now been empty for approaching two years and is beginning to suffer from neglect and lack of heating. It will continue to deteriorate and also be open to vandalism and further damage if left for a further prolonged period. Broken panes of glass in the main north window of the chapel facing the Green are a manifestation of this. As an existing key building valued in the street scape, special attention is justified in widening its market appeal to secure its future as soon as possible with a suitable buyer.
- 6.7. The planning authority, when receiving in August 2014 an application to convert the building to a larger dwelling, refused the application on the grounds that the building was being over developed and that its character would be damaged by the extensive window and roof alterations. The previous buyer had justified the scale of the proposal on grounds of creating a larger property to bring down the cost of conversion per square metre. This is a clear indication that the cost of the conversion in a sympathetic manner will be more costly.
- 6.8. Its prominent siting in the centre of Barton le Willows creating an attractive and historic landmark building is considered important to the village. Its retention is therefore very important, and justifies special consideration.
- 6.9. Discussions took place in April this year between the Revd. Mike Smith representing the Ryedale Methodist circuit and Jill Thompson and Daniel Wheelwright from Local Plans Section of Ryedale District Council. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the matter of local occupancy conditions which are now having a serious impact on the sale of redundant chapels which are mostly located in non-service villages. Barton le Willows chapel is the largest and most significant of the group currently available and the one that is likely to be the most expensive to convert because of its size. It was suggested and agreed that an argument could be made for exemption where it can be argued that local occupancy is seriously limiting the chances of an alternative use being found. A planning application to achieve this was suggested.
- 6.10. The addition of land to the application site in order to create a safe turning area to satisfy the Highway Authority concerns makes development of the site even more expensive, further putting it beyond potential local occupier budgets.

7.0. Justification for the proposal:

(in addition to the points already made under section 6 relating to Local Occupancy restrictions.)

- 7.1.The property is vacant and no longer needed for worship purposes by the local Methodist Church. An alternative use needs to be found for it to achieve the widest possible interest, if it is to be retained as a significant key asset within the Conservation area.
- 7.2.The building can be easily converted to a three bedroom dwelling with virtually no external alteration.
- 7.3.Internally the the building can be adapted to provide a three bedroom dwelling without significant alteration, retaining internal features of character. It contributes positively to the variety and mix of new housing in the area.
- 7.4.Off road parking and turning for two cars can be achieved within the proposed site area, sufficient to serve a three bedroom dwelling.
- 7.5.The proposal seeks an alternative use, enabling the property to be converted to form another residential unit to meet housing demand in the area. The re-use of an existing building is sustainable and desirable.
- 7.6.There is no need for additional local assembly buildings in the village of Barton le Willows which already has a village hall with more modern facilities. The Village has no further current need for another large community space.
- 7.7.Its restricted site, fronting on to a narrow street makes it unsuitable for any business activity that would require parking for employees or large vehicles. Most commercial uses would give rise to undesirable incursion of commercial vehicles on the Green which would be unsightly, and difficult to control. A residential use would lead to only a limited need for parking which can be accommodated within the site area.
- 7.8.Its retention is considered important to the streetscape and efforts to find a suitable alternative use has not been successful so far. Ample opportunity had been given for someone to come forward to use it for non-residential purposes, but this has not happened.

8.0. Policy considerations.

National planning Policy Framework 2012 et seq.
Section 6. Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
Section 7. Requiring good design.
Section 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Ryedale Plan. Adopted Local Plan Strategy 2014.

Policy SP2: Delivery and Distribution of New housing.

Policy SP4: Type and mix of new housing. The proposal provides a wheelchair accessible and usable dwelling of unique character, thereby extending choice.

Policy SP12: Heritage – Retention of this building contributes positively to the Conservation area of Barton-le-'willows

Policy SP21: Occupancy Restrictions: Barton le Willows is a non-service village so local occupancy restrictions would normally apply, however the cost of conversion severely limits the potential for finding a qualifying local occupier able to afford the conversion. The benefits of retaining a key existing building in a largely unaltered condition within the Conservation Area outweighs the arguments in favour of local occupancy in this particular case.

Site Photographs.



Eastern view of the building showing window detailing.



The south east view of the building as it faces on to The Green.



East view of service wing



Interior view of south window



Front entrance doorway.



interior of chapel looking southwards



Interior of chapel.

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