Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

MISSION CHURCH, STANLEY

JULY 2016

Site Address:
Former Mission Church, Tompkin Road, Stanley, Staffordshire, ST9 9LX

Applicant:
Mr. D. McGuinness

Proposal:
Change of use of former Mission Church to form 1no. Dwelling

Planning Statement:
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Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. D. McGuinness to seek planning permission for the conversion and alteration of a former Mission Church at Tompkin Road, Stanley for form a single dwellinghouse.

1.2 The application proposes the creation of a new first floor within the building, accessed via a new staircase, and the insertion of a new window at first floor level in the rear (south) elevation along with a single conservation style rooflight. The proposal otherwise makes beneficial reuse of existing openings. The resultant accommodation will comprise of a lounge, kitchen diner and w.c. at ground floor, with two bedrooms and family bathroom at first floor.

1.3 The building does not presently benefit from any form of off-street parking. The applicant however proposes the provision of two off-street parking spaces to serve the proposed dwelling, to be accommodated within the adjacent courtyard, and accessed via the existing vehicular access to Ivy House Farm, which is attached to the Mission Church and is also owned by the applicant.

2 Site Location

2.1 The existing building comprises a former Mission Church, constructed from stone with a Staffordshire Blue Plain Clay tiled roof. The building is attached to Ivy House Farm to the east and has been disused for a considerable period of time. Ivy House Farm is an elongated, two storey stone and tile cottage that benefits from a substantial curtilage to its rear, within which is located a blockwork and tile outbuilding and large 'L' shaped stable block. The site lies

on the south side of Tompkin Road in the centre of Stanley village, and is bordered to the west by the domestic curtilage of Stanley House. Further residential development is located opposite. The site as a whole lies within the Stanley Conservation Area. An aerial photograph showing the site in its surrounding context is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph of Site



Source: Google Earth

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the

Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.1 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

3.2 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*

- *or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.3 Policy SS6c of the adopted Core Strategy relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The policy goes on to state that the Council will meet essential local needs by (amongst others):

- *Allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2.*

3.2 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be acceptable where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion and it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable through a marketing exercise, or its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

3.3 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

3.4 Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Historic Environment' and states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the

historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains. It will seek to achieve this by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance; and preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.

3.5 Policy T1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and helps deliver the priorities of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plans, where this is consistent with other policies. This will be achieved by, amongst others, ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development, including the delivery of new housing and seeks to secure high quality design. Its also sets out guidance in respect

of safeguarding heritage assets. The provisions of the NPPF are discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 The application proposes the conversion of a former Mission Church to form a single dwellinghouse. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that within the rural areas, the Council will meet essential local needs by allowing the conversion of an existing rural building to residential use where it accords with policy R2 of the Core Strategy. Policy R2 of the Core Strategy states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be acceptable where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion and it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable through a marketing exercise, or its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

5.2 The existing building is considered to be worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion as it constitutes a pleasant former Mission Church, that is of a simple scale, form and design, and which contributes positively to the character of the Stanley Conservation Area. It is therefore a building of merit. It is furthermore considered that its sensitive conversion to residential use will enable the building to be safeguarded, thus according with the requirements of policy R2 of the Core Strategy.

5.3 The application is also accompanied by a viability report prepared by Bury & Hilton (Chartered Surveyors) that has assessed the suitability of the building for alternative commercial and/or tourism use. The viability report comments that the size of Stanley village severely restricts the commercial

potential of the site as there would not be sufficient trade to warrant a retail outlet or other similar commercial use. The only access to the building would be onto Tompkin Road, which would mean any use by customers could present potential pedestrian/vehicular conflicts, as well as vehicles parked on the road. The viability report furthermore considers that conversion to a holiday let would not be practical as demand for holiday lets would be limited in this area as it is not regarded as a sought-after tourist location. As a result there would not be sufficient occupancy to warrant the conversion and running costs of such a unit. The costs for conversion of the building are estimated at £125,000 and the report concludes that the income generated from what would be a very small two-bedroomed cottage, would not be sufficient to warrant this degree of capital outlay. This leads Bury & Hilton to conclude that commercial or tourism use would not be a viable proposition and that residential use represents the most logical and viable use for the building.

5.4 Having regard to the conclusions of the viability report, and the fact that this proposal will serve to bring this building of merit back into beneficial use, the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy.

5.5 The proposal will furthermore not result in the creation of an isolated home in the countryside (paragraph 55 of the NPPF refers) as it would be located within easy reach of the facilities and services on offer within Endon. The conclusions of the Planning Inspector who conducted the recent appeal into the nearby Endon Riding School are noted in this regard (Appeal Reference 3140510). In allowing an appeal for the re-development of that site for residential use, the Inspector noted that a variety of local services were available within 2km distance of the site, with additional services available some 5km cycling distance away, adding that Manual for Streets suggests

that walking offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips, particularly those under 2 kilometres.

5.6 Although the Inspector subsequently went on to critique the nature of the journey to the nearby settlement, noting that the highway was not conducive to walking given speed limits and the absence of footways/street lighting (paragraph 24 refers), she nevertheless concluded in paragraph 26 that:

> *"I recognise that the site is remote from some facilities, and therefore is not as accessible as a more central or urban location. Overall however, whilst it has some shortcomings, I am satisfied that the site does offer opportunities for walking, cycling or using public transport instead of future occupiers being wholly reliant on the private car, with any such journeys being relatively short, given the location close to a sustainable settlement. As such, I consider that, whilst not ideal, this previously-developed site is not in an unacceptably remote location, with future occupiers having what I consider to be reasonable access to shops and services".*

5.7 The Mission Church site is located closer to Endon village than the Endon Riding School site, and is accessed (in the main) via the same route. It is therefore reasonable to conclude, in light of the above appeal decision, that the application site is not in an unacceptably remote location. As such the proposal accords with the provisions of paragraph 55 of the NPPF and is acceptable in principle.

Impact on Heritage Assets

5.8 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an

applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. The NPPF goes on to state in paragraph 131 that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

5.9 The application site itself does not contain a statutory listed building, nor does it appear on a register of non-statutory heritage assets. The site does however occupy a central position within the Stanley Conservation Area, which in itself constitutes a heritage asset. The Conservation Area covers the vast majority of Stanley village, extending eastwards along Tompkin Road, taking in parts of Puddy Lane and Stanley Moss Road to the south and southwest. It also includes land extending northwards down Stanley Bank towards Endon village. There are no listed buildings within the Conservation Area, but there is a fairly homogenised character to the village and this leads me to conclude that as a heritage asset, it has a moderate to important significance.

5.10 The application proposes the sensitive conversion of the Mission Church building, which is understood to have opened in 1868, and subsequently went on to be known as St. Agnes's Mission. Services were held in the Mission Church right the way into the late twentieth century, but the building has subsequently lain vacant, I am advised, for a period in excess of 20 years.

5.11 The proposed development will retain the existing appearance of the front (north) and side (west) elevations. The only external alterations to the building are the insertion of a first floor window in the rear (south) elevation along with the insertion of a conservation style rooflight in the south roof slope. These works will not have any prominence within the Conservation Area, nor indeed will the areas proposed for parking and private amenity space. The proposed development will therefore not impact on any existing important views within the Conservation Area, nor will it alter the existing visual relationship between the building and its surroundings. This leads me to conclude that the proposal will give rise to less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area.

5.12 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF advises that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF goes on to state 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, including securing its optimum viable use.

5.13 There is no definition within the NPPF as to what constitutes substantial or less than substantial harm, but the Planning Practice Guidance provides some assistance in this regard, confirming that:

> *"In general terms substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest". (Paragraph 017 refers).*

5.14 It is submitted that this proposal will result in less than significant harm to the heritage asset, and indeed will have a negligible impact on the character and appearance of this heritage asset. The proposal will derive a number of public benefits as discussed later in this Planning Assessment, and these are considered to clearly outweigh the negligible harm that would arise to the significance of this heritage asset. The proposed development therefore accords with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design & Layout

5.15 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

5.16 The submitted proposal adopts a sensitive design approach that makes beneficial reuse of existing openings within the building. In doing so it has

been possible to avoid any alterations to the existing front (north) and west (side) elevations. By resultant effect the proposal will not give rise to any adverse impact to the streetscene, as the building will retain its current appearance within views along Tompkin Road from the east and west.

5.17 The application does propose the insertion of a new window at first floor level within the rear (south) elevation, along with a new rooflight in the south facing roofslope. The new window adopts a form and design that is commensurate with the existing windows on the front elevation of the building, and the proposed rooflight will be of a flush fitting conservation style. These alterations are not considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the building or to the wider area, and as such the development accords with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

5.18 In terms of the site layout, consideration has been given to the impact of the proposal on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers, as well as the amenity of future occupiers of the dwelling. The use of the existing ground floor windows as principal rooms is not considered to raise any material planning issues, as the properties opposite are located some 23 metres away which is in excess of the 21m required by the Local Authority's informal amenity standards. Similarly the new rear facing window and rooflight will not give rise to any overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers, as they will look out over the existing courtyard and proposed private amenity space. Views from the rooflight in any event will not be possible owing to its position in the roofslope well above head height (see accompanying section drawing).

5.19 The proposal does nevertheless has some potential to give rise to a degree of harm to the amenity of the neighbouring occupier to the west (Stanley House) derived from the proposed first floor bedroom which will utilise the

existing round window in the gable end of the building. This looks out over the existing driveway to the property and part of its garden. In the interests of minimising the potential for overlooking and loss of privacy, and to address the fact the window will be at level with the floor of the bedroom, a void has been created behind the window. This will enable the window to be retained in its current form without being cut across by the new ceiling/floor, and will furthermore mean that views out are set back from the main elevation and thus framed by the existing walls.

5.20 The window will in any event be located at floor level (rather than eye level) owing to its position midway up the gable elevation, and will overlook the driveway and part of the garden. Stanley House benefits from a very substantial domestic curtilage, extending to its north, northwest, west and south, and the vast majority of this curtilage will not be affected in any way by the proposed development. There will furthermore be no direct impact on the dwelling itself. This leads me to conclude, on balance, that the design approach adopted will not lead to significant and demonstrable adverse impact to neighbouring residential amenity.

5.21 This notwithstanding, if the Local Authority considers that the proposal would give rise to significant and demonstrable adverse impacts to neighbouring amenity to outweigh the overall benefits of the development, the applicant would be agreeable to the imposition of a condition to secure the provision of obscure glazing to the round window. This would prevent any form of overlooking or loss of privacy from occurring.

5.22 In terms of amenity considerations for future occupiers of the dwelling, the rooms within the building will benefit from a good degree of natural light, and will furthermore benefit from an area of private amenity space to the rear of the building, accessed via a pathway, that extends to approximately

62m^2. Whilst this represents a modest shortfall on the Local Authority's informal requirement for the provision of 65m^2, it is considered to be more than sufficient for the modest level of accommodation that is being proposed. I therefore consider that future occupiers of the dwelling will be afforded an appropriate standard of residential amenity. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

3.4 The existing Mission Church does not benefit from any off-road parking provision, and if brought back into use (as it lawfully could), would derive on street parking that has the potential to cause highway safety concerns. This application constitutes betterment to that situation in that the applicant proposes the provision of two off-street car parking spaces within the existing courtyard to the rear of Ivy House Farm. This is large in nature and benefits from adequate turning space to enable vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear. There is furthermore good visibility on egress from the existing site access. This leads me to conclude that the proposed development will not give rise to harm to highway safety in the locality, and thus accords with the provisions of policy T1 of the Core Strategy.

Other Matters

5.23 In addition to the above matters, it is considered that there are a number of other material considerations which weigh in favour of the proposed development. The first of these is the Local Authority's inability to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing which means that this proposal has to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy, and paragraph 14 of the NPPF. As a consequence, this proposal should only be

refused if any adverse impacts of doing so would *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development.

5.24 The proposal will also deliver a number of public benefits including social and economic benefits associated with helping the Local Authority to meet its housing needs, and the generation of additional household expenditure. The proposal will also derive significant environmental benefits by securing the long-term future of the existing building to the benefit of the heritage of the area and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposal also entails the reuse of a previously developed site, something which is explicitly encouraged by the NPPF. These benefits are considered to weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development and should be taken into consideration when the application is determined.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Paragraph 186 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state in paragraph 187 that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

6.2 It is considered that this proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development that accords with the Development Plan having regard to the following conclusions:

- *The building is considered suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion;*

- *The building has a good degree of merit owing to its age, and simple scale, form and appearance;*

- *The building is unsuitable for commercial or tourism use as they would not be financially viable prospects;*

- *The absence of a five year deliverable supply of housing means this proposal should be considered in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and should only be refused if any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits;*

- *The proposal makes full and beneficial reuse of existing openings;*

- *The alterations proposed to the building will safeguard its character and appearance and not give rise to harm to the character and appearance of the streetscene;*

- *The proposal will have a negligible impact on the significance of the Stanley Conservation Area as a heritage asset;*

- *The proposal will not result in significant harm to neighbouring residential amenity;*

- *The proposal will not result in any adverse impact to highway safety and will indeed amount to betterment compared to the existing lawful use;*

- *The proposal will deliver a number of material planning benefits in the content of the three dimensions of sustainable development;*

- *The site occupies a sustainable location within easy walking and cycling distance of Endon village.*

6.3 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policies SS1, SS6c, R2, DC1, DC2 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposal will furthermore not result in any adverse impacts sufficient to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

6.4 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission accordingly in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy and paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.