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PLANNING / DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSAL : **FULL APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER METHODIST CHURCH (D1 USE) TO A SINGLE RESIDENTIAL DWELLING (C3 USE) AND CREATION OF TWO OFF ROAD PARKING SPACES**

ADDRESS : **BRADNOP METHODIST CHURCH, SCHOOL LANE, BRADNOP**

APPLICANT : **MR & MRS DEAVILLE**

DATE : **MAY 2018** **JOB No. : 2018-2317**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr & Mrs Deaville to prepare and submit a full planning application for the change of use of the former Bradnop Methodist Church (D1 use) to a single residential dwelling (C3 use). The application is accompanied by existing and proposed drawings which should be read in conjunction with this planning, design and access statement.

This statement analyses the site, the proposals and the policy context within which the proposals are made. Thereafter, it provides justification for approval of these proposals, primarily on the basis that the development would result in sustainable development which would positively contribute to the current under supply of housing without harm to the valued characteristics of the area, prejudicing residential amenity or neighbouring land uses or being detrimental to highway safety.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

Bradnop Methodist Church is a detached vernacular building constructed from stone under a plain clay tile roof which lies on the southern side of School Lane, Bradnop. The existing floor plans show that the main building consists of the church and congregation area which spans a length of 9.4m and a width of 7.6m/ A small extension serving a rear hall protrudes 5.5m off the rear wall and contains a catslide roof and external chimney stack. On the southern side of the main building stands a small entrance porch which is constructed from matching facing and roofing materials. A dedicated off road parking area for 2 vehicles is to be provided within the curtilage of the neighbouring dwelling Sytch Villa.

The building lies within a loose scattering of buildings which are predominately residential with School House 35m to the north east of the application site and Sytch Villa a similar distance to the east. Bradnop Village Hall stands some 20m to the south east of the building and a large residential property The Sticks and its associated curtilage sit to the south west.

3.0 PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks a change of use from a place of worship (Class D1 use) to a single residential dwellinghouse (Class C3 use) and the creation of two off road parking spaces. The submitted drawings show that the proposed dwelling would comprise of a lobby and utility room where the existing rear hall, kitchen and store areas are located, leading into a large open plan kitchen and living area in what is currently the main church congregation area with two bedrooms and a bathroom above.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

SMD/1978/003 Proposed toilet accommodation. Approved.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published on 27th March 2012 and revised in July in 2018 replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF also sets out requirements in respect of housing delivery and securing high quality design. The following are considered to be the most relevant chapters:-

- Chapter 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Chapter 5 - Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- Chapter 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Chapter 12 - Achieving Well Designed Places
- Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Chapter 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) and the Saved Local plan Proposals Map / Settlement Boundaries (1998). The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS1a (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development); SS2 (Future provision of Development); SS6 (Rural Areas); SS6b (Smaller Villages Area Strategy); SD1 (Sustainable Use of Resources); SD3 (Carbon Saving Measures in Development); H1 (New Housing); DC1 (Design Considerations); DC2 (The Historic Environment); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); C1 (Creating Sustainable Communities); R1 (Rural Diversification); R2 (Rural Housing) NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources); T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport) and T2 (Other Sustainable Transport Measures). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

In terms of Supplementary Planning Guidance the Space About Dwellings (September 1998 - Appendix 3 of the Local Plan [1998]) and Design Principles for Staffordshire Moorlands are also important in the consideration of this application.

Also of particular relevance to this application is the Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018) which sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing land equivalent to 1.8 years.

6.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are therefore considered to be:-

- The principle of development
- Design & impact on a non designated heritage asset
- Impact on biodiversity
- Residential amenity
- Highway safety

The Principle of Development

Policies in the Core Strategy set out the spatial strategy for housing development in the District and essentially adopt a hierarchy approach which seeks to concentrate the majority in the three main towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph. For the purposes of this assessment the site is situated outside any recognised settlement boundary and is therefore considered to be located within an area of open countryside and is therefore subject to policies SS6, SS6c, R1 and R2 of the Core Strategy.

The above policies make provision for the conversion of a non residential rural building for residential use 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; or
- Conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

In terms of the above the application building comprises of a traditional vernacular building which by virtue of its scale, form, design and materials is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. Furthermore, its size, location and design would mean that it would not be suitable for any alternative agricultural or commercial uses and this has been confirmed in a pre-application response dated 20th August 2018 (copy attached).

Policy C1 of the Core Strategy seeks to safeguard existing community facilities and would resist proposals which involve the loss of a community facility unless:-

An alternative facility of the same type is available or can be provided in an accessible location in the same locality; or

A viable appraisal including a marketing exercise by a qualified professional demonstrates that there are no options for continued use as a community facility which are financially viable and it can be demonstrated that the loss of the facility would not disadvantage local residents.

The Methodist Church closed its doors to active worship in 2015 due to dwindling numbers and poor attendance. In July 2015 the Methodist Circuit instructed Whittaker & Biggs to sell the building as it was no longer viable and in August 2015 it was purchased by the applicants. At the time of its closure the remaining congregation transferred to alternative facilities including those located within Leek, Thorncliffe and Ipstones.

Bradnop is a small hamlet with a small population. In terms of facilities there is a village hall which sits adjacent to the application building. It is currently under used and available for hire and as such provides an adequate alternative to the application building. In terms of other community facilities such as post office or shop etc it is likely that the modest size of the Bradnop community would not be able to sustain any commercial venture. In addition it should be noted that such community facilities are provided both within the neighbouring town of Leek and village of Ipstones both of which are within close proximity and easily reached by a range of sustainable transport methods. Refusal of the scheme would also lead to continued vacancy and potential dereliction

of the building. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with policy C1 of the adopted Development Plan and the proposed use would be compatible with the surrounding land uses.

Design & Impact on a non designated heritage asset

Policy DC2 off the adopted Core Strategy and Chapter 16 of the NPPF refer to the historic environment and the requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of designated and non designated assets including their setting. The Staffordshire Moorlands "Design Principles" also provides useful guidance on conversions of rural buildings. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non designated heritage assets a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The specific design policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Developments should function well and establish a strong sense of place creating attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Proposals should also optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and respond to local character and history including local materials and the use of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Developments should also create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

Policy DC1 sets out the design criteria relating to new development to reinforce local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area. The recently updated NPPF advises that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and states that great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help to raise the standard of design more generally within the area. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area.

The application building is utilitarian in terms of its appearance. The proposed conversion would be sympathetic as it would be contained within the shell of the existing without any extension. All existing openings would be reused and the only alteration would be the introduction of rooflights in the north east and south west elevations. These have been kept as low to the eaves line and positioned above existing openings where possible. Their size has also been kept to a minimum and they would be of a conservation design so as to reduce their visual impact. A flue pipe serving a wood burning stove is also proposed. Again this has been sited so as to minimise its impact and will be painted a flat matt black colour to reduce its visual impact. The creation of the proposed off road parking provision would result in the loss of a 4.8m section of drystone boundary wall.

The application site does not lie within or adjacent to a conservation area however three listed buildings are located in close proximity to the application building, The closest School House is to the north east with Moorcroft and Buckley Farm to the north and north east respectively, both of which are located on the opposite side of School Lane.

Given that the application building is existing and that there would be minimal change to its external appearance it is not considered that the proposed development would be detrimental to the non designated heritage asset or the special or historic interests of any of the neighbouring listed buildings or their settings. Whilst the loss of the boundary wall to facilitate the off road parking provision is unfortunate it is not considered that this would be so detrimental as to warrant refusal of the scheme especially as this element in itself does not require the benefit of planning permission. The new perimeter wall for the parking area shall be formed using the stone in the existing boundary wall and the parking area shall be surfaced in black tarmac with a cobblestone apron linking it to the shared space. Given the sensitive and sympathetic approach to the proposed conversion it is not considered that the scheme, as submitted would adversely affect the non designated heritage asset, the special or historic significance of any of the neighbouring listed buildings or their settings. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies DC1 and DC2 of the adopted Core Strategy as well as guidance contained within the NPPF and supplementary planning guidance.

Amenity

The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF also states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area. Core Strategy policy DC1 requires that all development proposals should 'protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.' The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Space About Dwellings' details standards that should be considered and met to ensure privacy for existing and proposed residents.

Given the juxtaposition of the application site with the adjacent dwellings and neighbouring land uses, the previous use of the site, intervening distance and boundary treatments it is considered that the proposed scheme would respect the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings and provide an adequate degree of amenity to the occupiers of the proposed units. The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with policy DC1 of the adopted CS and guidance contained within the NPPF in this respect.

Highways

Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states: Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in CS Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

Having regard to the previous use of the application building it is considered that its re-use for residential purposes would result in a decrease in vehicular activity of the site. Whilst the constraints of the application site mean that it is not possible to provide off road parking within the site 2 dedicated off road parking spaces are to be provided within the curtilage of the adjacent dwelling, Sytch Villa, which is owned by the applicants. Provision of these spaces would not compromise off road parking provision for this dwelling with adequate provision maintained within the existing garage and hard standing area. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with CS policy T1 and guidance contained within the NPPF.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The Government has a strong commitment to growth and provides a strong presumption in favour of development and is committed to increasing levels of growth. 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 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. It also states in the NPPF that where proposals accord with the development plan they should be approved without delay, and where policies are out-of-date permission should only be refused where there is significant and demonstrable harm to outweigh the benefits of the development.

The submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development in that it involves the re-use of an existing rural building which is considered suitable in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. The proposal adopts a sympathetic approach to the conversion of the building and will not give rise to any material harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or the surrounding area. The proposal furthermore will not derive any significant issues in respect of highway safety nor will it be prejudicial to residential amenity. The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS6c, R2, DC1, DC2 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The conversion of the building to residential use would also provide a beneficial re-use for a building considered to be a non designated heritage asset and is considered to be appropriate in locational terms having regard to the Local Authority's undersupply of housing and sustainable location of the site. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development.

8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the re-use of the existing vacant building for residential purposes.

AMOUNT

The proposal is for a single two bedroomed dwelling.

LAYOUT

The layout of the proposed dwelling is shown on the submitted plans.

SCALE

The application building will be converted within the shell of the existing building without any extension or enlargement.

LANDSCAPING

No landscaping is proposed as part of this application.

APPEARANCE

The proposed development will retain the external character and appearance of the application building with the only alterations limited to the insertion of rooflights within the north east and south west elevations and a flue pipe to serve a wood burning stove. These are shown on the submitted drawings.

ACCESS

Pedestrian access will be as shown on the submitted plans. Dedicated off road parking provision will be provided off the shared space in the curtilage of the adjacent dwelling Sytch Villa. The application building is located within a sustainable location with easy access to public transport and alternative transport modes.