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PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION FOR CONVERSION OF ST WILFRID'S CHURCH

ST WILFRID'S CHURCH, COTTON LANE, COTTON

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF AMOS GROUP LTD.

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PLANNING | DESIGN | ENVIRONMENT | ECONOMICS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group, on behalf of Amos Group Ltd (the Applicant), and supports a planning and listed building consent application to convert St Wilfrid's church into four holiday lets and accompanying site office.

1.2 The holiday lets will comprise of one 3-bed, one 9-bed and two 8-bed apartments. The office space is intended to be used by Amos Group for their estate management.

1.3 The purpose of this document is to demonstrate that the Applicant has fully considered the design and access issues prior to the submission of the planning application. This report therefore covers the following matters:

- Use
- Amount
- Layout
- Scale
- Landscaping
- Appearance
- Access

2. THE SITE

2.1 The application site measures 2,048m2 and contains the Grade II listed St Wilfrid's Church, with its associated hardstanding/parking area. It is bounded by Cotton College to the west and is serviced by a private drive accessible from Cotton Lane.

2.2 The accompanying Heritage Statement provides a comprehensive overview of the history of St Wilfrid's Church and the historic significance of the building and its setting.

2.3 To summarise, the site consists of the Grade II listed St Wilfrid's Church built around the 1840s by architect Augustus Pugin. It lies adjacent to the derelict Cotton College and St John the Baptist Church, both Grade II listed.

2.4 The site is located approximately 1.0km from the village of Cotton and lies within the Churnet Valley. Churnet Valley is not only a valued landscape area but a highly popular tourist destination, with the nearby Alton Towers Amusement Park representing a major tourist attraction for the area.

3. DESIGN

3.1 The importance of sustaining and enhancing the Grade II listed building (St Wilfrid's Church) was foremost in considering the design options for the conversion of the building. St Wilfrid's is identified as a 'building at risk' by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Sustaining the long-term significance of the heritage asset is a priority.

3.2 The design proposals for the site have been informed by a detailed assessment of the site's heritage significance. These are now discussed against the various aspects of design, as listed in section 1 of this Statement.

Proposed Measurements

3.3 The proposed measurements for the four holiday lets and associated office unit are as follows;

- Unit 1 - 248m2
- Unit 2 - 237m2
- Unit 3 - 275m2
- Unit 4 - 94m2
- Office - 80m2

Use

3.4 St Wilfrid's Church was last used for ecclesiastical purposes in 2010. The building has remained vacant since. The building is now falling into disrepair and extensive repairs are urgently required. The cost of these repairs will be substantial so finding a viable reuse of the building is a priority.

3.5 The application proposal seeks to convert St Wilfrid's church into 4 holiday lets along with office space. This use will allow Amos Group to undertake the essential works which will safeguard the Grade II listed church for the foreseeable future.

3.6 Tourist accommodation is also a use that is supported by the local plan policy and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD.

Amount

3.7 The holiday lets will comprise of one 3-bed, two 8-bed and one 9-bed holiday cottages. A small amount of office space is proposed, and this is intended to be used by Amos Group (the applicant) and will assist with estate management.

3.8 The proposal also includes the formation of 19 parking spaces through the rationalisation of an existing area of hardstanding. This area has historically been used for parking for Cotton College, along with the two churches but on an ad-hoc basis.

Layout

3.9 The proposal involves the change of use of St Wilfrid's Church. No new buildings are proposed. The works to convert the church do involve the formation of new internal (first and second) floors. This is achieved by forming an internal structure to support the new floors which will have minimal impact on the historic fabric. This will not affect the joinery or masonry, which are deemed as a significant heritage asset. These internal works would be largely reversible without harming the heritage significance should alternative development be required in the future.

3.10 Demountable walls have been designed so as not to harm the pillars, masonry or joinery which are of key significance to the building. The stained-glass windows will also not be harmed by the implementation of the internal structure.

3.11 Existing doorways will be utilised to provide access to the office along with units 1 and 2. New entrance doors are proposed for units 3 and 4 on the northern and southern elevations of the building.

3.12 In the interests of preserving the historic character of the church, it is not possible to achieve step free access into the building.

3.13 The proposal involves minimal external works. The development does not impact trees and therefore the established verdant character of the area will be maintained.

3.14 Existing access onto Cotton Lane will be used to serve the development and it is considered that there is no requirement to widen the access drive. The proposal

ensures that the burial ground situated to the east of St Wilfrid's Church remains untouched.

3.15 The heritage statement emphasises that the building being the work of Augustus Pugin is of significant importance. Therefore, any development should minimise the impact on the external form and appearance of the building. The proposed changes to the exterior of the building are minor and do not damage the form of Pugin's design. To minimise the visual impact on the external views of the church, the proposed rooflights are to be located to face into the roof-valley to the south and north of the pitch. This will not alter the aisle roof.

3.16 Appropriate surfacing and landscaping will be provided on the approach road to the church, while the wider Cotton College grounds will be unaltered. Mature trees on these grounds will be kept. The former burial grounds and open grassed space around the site will remain in-situ.

Landscape

3.17 The site is surrounded by mature trees and semi-improved grassland forming the grounds of the former Cotton College. Soft landscaping on site is limited to a small area of amenity space located immediately surrounding the church. These areas will be available for guests of the accommodation to use.

Appearance

3.18 The proposed development on St Wilfrid's Church comprises very minor external changes, including the installation of 10 new Keylite rooflights set within the existing roof, a new window on the second floor, replacement valley gutter for maintenance and two new entrance doorways to the building. These minor alterations to the building do not in any way compromise the heritage significance of the church. Overall the conversion and reuse of the building will enhance the appearance of the site, which has fallen into disrepair.

3.19 Internal changes to St Wilfrid's Church will not affect the heritage significance of the building. The proposed walls and floors will be demountable, meaning that they can be removed at a future date if required. This will not harm the heritage significance of St Wilfrid's Church, in particular the masonry and joinery.

3.20 The demountable walls will not affect the beauty and heritage of the stained glass windows, which are identified by both Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and

the Heritage Statement as a key part of the church building. The walls and floors have been placed an appropriate distance away from the windows so as not to negatively impact their heritage significance. The walls and floors being removable also means there will be no permanent damage to the windows.

3.21 The development has considered the key internal features and has been designed so that important heritage assets within the church remain unaffected by development. Furthermore, the proposed development allows for change of use for the church in future should the situation arise with the demountable walls installed.

4. ACCESS

4.1 The access into the site will be directly from Cotton Lane. This is an established entrance to the site which will be restored in a manner sympathetic to the character of the area.

4.2 Pedestrian access is limited due to the remove location of the site, but there are opportunities to access the surrounding public footpath and bridleway network, and The Star public house is within walking distance to the site, some 800 metres to the south along Cotton Lane.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The design and access issues of the proposed conversion of St Wilfrid's church into 4 holiday lets along with office accommodation, associated parking and landscaping have been assessed in this Statement.

5.1 The external alterations to St Wilfrid's Church, including the additional entrances to the building and Keylite windows in the roof will have a negligible impact heritage significance of the building. The interventions to the historic fabric are the minimum required to deliver the new use and safeguard the long-term significance of this heritage asset.