

PLANNING STATEMENT

**FORMER METHODIST CHAPEL
KINGSLEY MOOR**

OCTOBER 2022

Site Address:

Former Methodist Chapel, Kingsley Road, Kingsley Moor, ST10 2PS

Applicant:

GN Holdings Limited

Proposal:

Proposed change of use and alteration of former
Methodist chapel to office use

Planning Statement:

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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. G. Nixon of GN Holdings Limited. to seek full planning permission for the change of use and alteration of the former Methodist Chapel at Kingsley Road, Kingsley Moor to office use (Use Class E).

1.2 The existing chapel has a gross internal floor area of 86.8 square metres, and comprises the main seating area and pulpit, along with a separate kitchen, toilet and entrance porch. The application proposes the change of use of the building to offices, comprising of office space, board room, staff room and toilet at ground floor with new stairs up to a mezzanine level at first floor which will provide additional office space and ancillary storage. The resultant gross internal floor area of the offices will be some 124 square metres.

1.3 Along with the change of use of the building to offices, the application also proposes external alterations to the building comprising of:

- The insertion of a 1.9m x 1.9m window in the rear elevation to replace an existing horizontally proportioned window with dimensions of 1.9m x 0.9m.
- The insertion of a 1.1m x 1.9m window in the side / east elevation to replace an existing smaller window with dimensions of 1.1m x 0.9m.
- The insertion of 16no. rooflights (8 per roofslope) to provide a source of natural daylight to the mezzanine office space.
- The insertion of new double glazed windows into existing window openings.

- 1.4 The building is surrounded on all sides by hardstanding which is to be used for the parking of staff vehicles. A total of 7no. parking spaces are proposed as shown on the proposed site plan. One of the parking spaces will be provided with an electric vehicle charging point.

2 Site Location

- 2.1 The application site lies on the southern side of the Kingsley Road (A52) and comprises a former Methodist chapel that stands to a ridge height of 8 metres and which is constructed from red facing brickwork with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof. The building has been extended at some point in its history to provide a single storey extension to its rear (accommodating the kitchen), and a small gabled extension to its eastern side elevation (accommodating the toilet). It occupies a prominent position at the junction of Kingsley Road with the Leek Road (A522), with its front elevation facing towards the junction.
- 2.2 The building sits within a rectangular shaped plot that is laid wholly to hardstanding, and which was previously used as parking for the Methodist Church. A low level brick wall encloses the eastern and southern boundaries of the site, with a dry stone wall enclosing the western site boundary. Open fields extend to the east, west and south of the site, with Blakeley Lane enclosing the northern site boundary.
- 2.3 The building is not statutorily listed, nor does it lie within a Conservation Area. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

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 Local Plan of which the following policies are of relevance to the determination of this application:

3.1 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land 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
- Increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce
- A healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment
- Development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings
- Support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions

- 3.2 Policy SS4 of the Local Plan relates to 'Strategic Housing and Employment Land Supply' and states that land will be made available for 15.3ha of employment land which comprises of 50% B1a/B1b (office, R&D) and 50% B1c/B2/B8 (light industry, general industry, storage and distribution) through the allocation of sites under Policy E2 and through windfall sites.
- 3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved through a number of actions, including:
- Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified.
 - Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape.
 - Maintain the Green Belt, exercising strict control over inappropriate development allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.
- 3.4 Policy E1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Employment Development' and states that new employment development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs, having regard to the Spatial Strategy Policies in SS2, SS3, area strategy policies, and general employment

land requirements set out in Policy SS4. It goes on to state that In general, the Council will endeavour to support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District, subject to a number of provisions, including the following:

- Schemes involving the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, will be considered favourably where the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings

3.5 Policy E1 also states that the Council will encourage provision for small scale and start-up businesses.

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, 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
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance
- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution

- promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use

3.7 Policy NE1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Biodiversity and Geological Resources' and states that these will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development (and having regard to relevant ecological evidence) by (amongst other measures):

- Conserving, and enhancing regional and locally designated sites. The Council will not permit any development proposal which would directly or indirectly result in significant harm to geological and biodiversity conservation interests, unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - A) there is no appropriate alternative site available; and
 - B) all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to any such proposal have been satisfied; and
 - C) appropriate conservation and mitigation measures are provided; or if it is demonstrated that this is not possible
 - D) the need for, and benefit of, the development is demonstrated to clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site and compensatory measures are implemented.
- Expecting all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are

appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative. Where any mitigation and compensation measures are required, they should be appropriately scheduled and managed according to the nature, size and scale of the development so as to minimise impacts that may disturb protected or important habitats and species.

3.8 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to ‘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 accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by:

1. 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.
2. Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.
3. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
4. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets our policies, *inter-alia*, aimed at safeguarding the Green Belt, supporting the growth of the economy, ensuring high quality design, safeguarding highway safety and securing a net gain to biodiversity. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Growth Strategy

- 4.2 The SMDC Growth Strategy (2018) confirms that employment growth is a key political priority and identifies a number of issues with regards to business, employment growth and skills. The content of the Growth Strategy has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

Impact on Green Belt

- 5.1 The application proposes the change of use and alteration of an existing building, on a site that is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development, allowing only for exceptions as set out in Government policy.
- 5.2 Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include:

“the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building”

- 5.3 Paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies further types of types of development that are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt, provided that they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The list of exceptions includes:

“the reuse of buildings provided that the buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction”

- 5.4 The submitted proposal involves both the reuse of an existing building, as well as alterations to an existing building. The existing building has been in situ on the site since around 1900 (its foundation stones date from 1890), and is evidently of a permanent and substantial construction, comprising a robust

brick and tile structure that has no evidence of structural deflection or deterioration.

5.5 The proposed reuse of the building for offices will not give rise to any harm to the openness of the Green Belt, as the use of the external areas of hardstanding for the parking of vehicles will have no greater impact on the Green Belt than its previous use for parking associated with the Methodist Church. The proposed change of use of the building consequently amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt in accordance with Policy SS10 of the Local Plan and paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.6 The proposed external alterations to the building are modest in nature, comprising the insertion of two larger window openings into the previously extended part of the building, along with the insertion of 16no. rooflights (8no. on each roof slope) and the provision of double glazed windows into the existing window openings. The proposal will not result in any increase in the size of the existing building and consequently will not give rise to a disproportionate addition to the original building. The proposed external alterations therefore also amount to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with Policy SS10 of the Local Plan and paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Economic Impact

5.7 Paragraph 81 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs

and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential”.

- 5.8 Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should enable:

“The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”

- 5.9 This guidance is enshrined within Policies SS4, SS10 and E1 of the Local Plan which support the development of business for employment use and confirms that the Council will **consider favourably** schemes involving the reuse of rural buildings for commercial enterprise where the proposed use does not harm the building’s character and / or the character of its surroundings. Policy E1 also states that the Council will encourage provision for small-scale businesses.
- 5.10 The submitted proposal entails the reuse of a rural building for small-scale office use, and will not result in harm to the building’s character and / or the character of its surroundings (discussed later). The proposal will generate 7 full time jobs on the site, making a positive contribution to the local rural economy. The explanatory text to policy E1 confirms that the Local Authority’s Employment Land Study has highlighted the need for the local economy to rely less on the manufacturing industry and to stimulate the private sector by making more sites available. The Study also indicates a particular need for

starter units and the potential for offices. The proposed development accords with those objectives and meets the requirements of policies SS10 and E1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design & Layout

- 5.11 The submitted proposal adopts a sensitive approach to the alteration of the building, with the main elevations, form of the building and majority of openings unaltered from their current appearance. The main areas of intervention are the introduction of two larger openings on the rear and side elevation, in a part of the building that is a later addition, and not part of its original structure, along with the insertion of double glazed windows into the existing other openings. Those works will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the building.
- 5.12 The application also proposes the insertion of 16no. rooflights to serve the proposed mezzanine floor level. A total of 8no. rooflights will be provided on each roofslope, with those on the western roofslope being largely screened from public view on approach to the site along the Kingsley Road by the existing vegetation that abuts up to the western site boundary. The rooflights would only come into view when more or less alongside the building.
- 5.13 The rooflights on the eastern roofslope would be more conspicuous, as the side elevation of the building is readily visible on approach along the Leek Road from the east. The rooflights will nevertheless be of the flush fitting conservation variety so will assimilate with the existing roofslope and not materially detract from the character and appearance of the building. They will provide the first floor mezzanine with a good source of natural daylight, thereby reducing reliance upon non-renewable sources of energy.

- 5.14 Externally it is proposed to reuse the existing car park to provide parking for 7no. vehicles, including one with an electric vehicle charging point located adjacent to the front entrance porch. The impact of parked vehicles on the site will be no different to its lawful use for the parking of cars associated with the Methodist Church. The proposed development is consequently concluded to meet the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

- 5.15 The site benefits from two vehicular access points off the Kingsley Road, which serve the areas of hardstanding down either side of the building and to its rear. The applicant proposes to utilise the access on the basis of a one way in / out arrangement in the interests of avoiding any conflict between vehicles arriving at the site and those trying to leave. In practice most vehicles will be arriving at the same time and leaving at the same time in any event, but the one-way arrangement will serve to minimise any conflicts from arising.
- 5.16 The access points benefit from reasonably good visibility in both directions on egress, and their reuse to serve the proposed offices will have no greater impact on highway safety than their previous use serving the Methodist Chapel. The proposed parking areas also afford sufficient manouvering space to enable vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear.
- 5.17 The site occupies a sustainable location that is well served by public transport, with bus stops located a short distance to the east of the site along the Leek Road, which services operating every half an hour throughout the day, connecting with Hanley, Cheadle, Upper Tean and Uttoxeter. Employees of the business will therefore be able to readily access the site via public transport should they wish to do so.
- 5.18 In terms of parking provision, the Local Authority's adopted parking standards, as set out in Appendix 2 to the Local Plan, require the provision of one parking

space per 25 square metres of floorspace up to 250 square metres and then one space per 30 square metres thereafter. The gross internal floor area of the proposed office use. Inclusive of its mezzanine, will extend to some 124 square metres, which equates to a parking requirement of 5 spaces. The submitted proposal demonstrates that a total of 7no. spaces will be accommodated on site, thereby ensuring that the proposal provides sufficient parking to meets the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity

- 5.19 The application is accompanied by a Bat Survey prepared by Fauna Forest Ecology which has assessed the building for bat roosting opportunities and for evidence of bats. The initial survey identified a number of potential roosting opportunities in the form of raised tiles, dislodged lead flashing and small gaps beneath the ridge tiles.
- 5.20 As a consequence of the above a series of bat activity surveys were undertaken which have served to identify three bat roosts within the building, each used by common pipistrelle bats. Owing to the location of those roosts the Bat Survey confirms that the proposed works to insert the new rooflights into the roof of the building are unlikely to have an impact upon them. Consequently, a bat mitigation licence will not be required.
- 5.21 The Bat Survey nevertheless recommends that a precautionary working method be adopted, and that any external lighting be carefully considered so as not to cause light spillage over the adjacent fields and hedgerows. The applicant is agreeable to carrying out the development in accordance with these recommendations as well as providing a bat box to secure a net gain to biodiversity, in accordance with the objectives of policy NE1 of the Local Plan.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The reuse and alteration of the building amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.
- The Local Plan explicitly supports the reuse of rural buildings for commercial use.
- The proposed development will contribute positively to the local economy.
- The proposed development will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the existing building or the wider surrounding area.
- The proposed development will have a safe means of vehicular access and will provide adequate off-street parking.
- The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on protected species and will secure a net gain to biodiversity.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, SS4, SS10, E1, DC1, T1 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and policies set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.