Design & Access Statement

CHANGE OF USE FROM CHAPEL (D1)
TO RESIDENTIAL DWELLING (USE CLASS C3)
AS HOLIDAY LET

The Former Chapel, Thorncliffe, Leek ST13 7LP

for

Mr Jon D. South & Miss Stefania L. Russo



I ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTEXT OF THE SITE

1. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE AND AREA

This site is situated on the road off Anchors Lane in Thorncliffe, bordering Grove Bank Farm.

The building is a traditionally constructed chapel dating back to 1839, consisting of a main rectangular stone-built structure with pitched slate roof, and an attached rectangular building, also built in stone with same characteristics and currently covered by a corrugated roofing.

The site is within a little rural area where there are some groups of houses and circa 90 yards from the property a gastro pub (The Reform Inn). The hamlet is a collection of houses and local farms with a range of buildings showing the vernacular progression of the area. Thorncliffe is located a short distance from Leek.

The property is not listed and does not fall within a conservation area.

2. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE AND AREA

Thorncliffe is a small hamlet with a range of buildings from small brick built/post-War houses, stone built cottages and farms.

3. POSSIBLE IMPACT ON THE ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA

In line with Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan whereby Tourism is identified as one of the key areas where the District can have a major role to help bring more people in and diversify its economy, the development is aimed to bring more tourism to the area as the site will be used as a holiday home, thus attracting new people to the Peak District and therefore having some impact on the economic characteristics of the area as surely tourists will be using the local public house.

As part of the Council's Challenges in the Policy, to protect and enhance the distinctive quality of the environment, it is also recognized there is also a need to make better use of existing buildings which are of value and add to the character of settlements.

The conversion would make viable use of the building as the Chapel has lost its use of house of prayer and it was sold by the Methodist Church in July 2022 along with other Methodist Churches in Leek and surrounding towns. In addition, the worship ceased longer than one year ago.

4. PRE ADVICE ON THE SCHEME

The Scheme proposal was submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council & High Peak Borough Council on 20 September 2022 (PAD/2022/0022) and a pre-advice meeting took place on 17 October 2022.

The response from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council & High Peak Borough Council following our pre-advice meeting was favorable to our proposed plans. Discussed were themes that included the internal layout and proposed floorplans for the conversion, the intended use of the property, external heritage of the building and plans for amenities and parking.

The internal layout focused on the size of the proposed rooms where we could clearly demonstrate that the size of all the rooms and the overall living space was in excess of any stated requirements. The intended use of the property was discussed in detail, giving the opportunity to clarify our intended purpose as a holiday home, therefore alleviating initial concerns about the lack of parking provision. However, several viable solutions are being explored, which are detailed in chapter III.

The external characteristics of the building were highlighted as important to the approval of the proposal concluding that any conversion scheme and the arrangement of living accommodation would be expected to work well and respectfully within the fabric of the building with a limited amount of external alteration. This conversation included a proposed dormer in the roof of the main building which has been subsequently dropped, and a discussion on the proposed terrace area above the adjacent building. The conclusion of the conversation regarding the terrace was that additional space outside was favourable, and that a balustrade constructed from the original stone was in keeping and welcomed as a positive solution.

In addition to these points, amenities and parking was discussed. The plans regarding all key amenities were accepted, with parking solutions discussed as viable options. However, it was stated that parking would have been a concern if the house was to be lived in a permanent dwelling, as a holiday home less applicable. It was further highlighted that the parking requirements for a residential property are less than the current requirements for the Chapel.

By way of this application, we have addressed the minor concerns raised during our meeting and have related the development to the Design Considerations of the Policy DC1 of the Local Plan as well as the Council's Vision for the Rural Areas and Policy E 4 Tourism and Cultural Development.

The overall feedback from the pre advice meeting was favourable to all aspects of the

project here listed. The aim of our proposal and the vision of the council were in alignment, converting a redundant site into high quality accommodation, protecting the heritage of the building and diversifying the local rural economy.

II DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT TO BE UNDERTAKEN

1. The proposed conversion of this small chapel to a low-key residential dwelling to be used for holiday lets is best suited for the preservation of this historic asset. The development can be completed with little interference to the original fabric and would ensure the longevity of the building and its setting for the future.

2. The proposed change of use is based on the fact that the development would not lead to the loss of community floorspace as the premises have lost their use of house of prayer several years ago, and consequently the building was sold by the Methodist Church along with other Methodist Churches in Leeks and surrounding towns. Pews from the Chapel were also sold/given to locals by the Methodist Church.

3. The proposal is credited with the retention of the existing building as it does not touch any eaves level of the building but it creates two storey home with the installation of an internal floor level with reasonable headroom (2.35m high on the ground floor, and 3.3m as peak height - with average over 2m high - on the first floor). This approach would respect the envelope of the existing building.

4. The building provides suitable living standards in compliance with the Government's 'nationally described housing standards' whereby the master bedroom measures 17.8 sq m (5.8m x 3.08m) and the single bedroom is 8.10 sq m (2.98m x 2.72m). Moreover, the proposal includes the insertion of four Velux windows (two on the west side roof slope, and two on the east side).
   The single bedroom would also have a window facing the roof on the eastern side of the lower building, using the existing internal opening on the same wall and **therefore with** no alteration to the roof.



5. The proposed renovation has taken into account all original characteristics and features of the building and the proposal includes matching as much as possible the stonework and slate tiling. The paving of the courtyard and proposed terrace will be surfaced with local stone in-keeping with aesthetics of the District. In addition, the original windows will be maintained and restored.

6. The current roof of the side attached rectangular building is covered by corrugated aluminum roofing therefore this needs to be removed and replaced. The proposal is to be covered with a flat roof with natural stone tiles matching the colour and style of the building and the existing diagonal shaped wall will become rectangular shaped balustrade around the roof terrace, using matching stones and the existing stones from the rear wall to the front visible wall, therefore, blending well with the original stone.



7. **In the hamlet there is no existing foul and surface water system therefore foul water from the dwelling will be through the installation of new wastewater treatment system. A sewage package treatment plant is to be used as found to be the most eco-responsible wastewater treatment system available, also used in ecological parks and in Sites of Special Interest (conform with the 2020 General Binding Rule for GBRs for septic tanks or small sewage treatment plants for domestic use). This can discharge to the water course (no discharge permit would be required as the volume is below 5 cubic meters/ day (actual design volume = 1.2 m^3 / day) and it would adhere to the Environment Agency binding rules, as amended on 25 August 2021.**
   The system will be installed either in the ground in the front courtyard as it is silent and odourless, or on the verge near the site for which an Asset License has been applied for on 4 January 2023 pursuant Section 50 license NRSWA 1991 for Private Apparatus and Permanent Structures Within the Staffordshire County Council's Highway.
   Rainwater will drain into soakaways.

8. The proposal is credited with the retention of the existing building and all housing requirements as specified in point II. 3 and 4 will be met, hence allowing the conversion

of the Chapel in accordance with Policy H1 (allowing conversion where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion).

III ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSESMENT OF THE CONTEXT OF THE SITE

1. The chapel is near residential properties and the proposed change of use to a residential property from a vacant house of prayer would not be out of character with the surrounding uses. Also, the proposal would not have a significant impact on the street scene.



2. The Local Plan Policy T1 and DC1 require off road parking provision and some outdoor amenity space. Currently the site does not come with enough curtilage to be allocated for parking. However, the verge outside the Chapel provides circa 30 sq m of area that could be used as parking once the Asset License is issued by Staffordshire County

Council's Highway as this area will need to be kept clear as it is located near the plot where the sewage treatment plant will be installed.

Saying that, under Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan's Parking Standards the current D1 use requires a higher amount of parking provision than the proposed single dwelling house.

Therefore, even if the proposed dwelling provided no on-plot parking spaces there would be an improvement on the current shortfall for the D1 use.

Of course, it would be preferable for the proposed dwelling to provide some parking and we will welcome the License from the Staffordshire County Council's Highway if approved; however, due to the use of the site as holiday let the aspirations for the site and its approach is for the use of alternative forms of travel with more sustainable ways such as walking or cycling.

Additionally, the local Public House provides a large car park, and it is likely that guests will visit the pub to drink and dine.

3. The site will benefit from the courtyard outside the Chapel, which is spacious enough for hosting table and four chairs, with beautiful views over the surrounding countryside and nearby several greenways and walking tracks. On the site there is space for bicycle rack, which will be encouraged.

IV CONCLUSION

The previous use of the building is no longer viable and the proposed scheme will respect the original and existing site characteristic, maintaining the style of the structure and materials. The proposed scheme responds to its location by making a progressive contribution to the area.

Finally, a bat survey has been requested. The results of the survey will be shared once available and although no visible evidence of bat have been currently found, it may result in the need for conditional control of this issue.