

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0586
Valid 21/11/2022

BLAKELEY LANE
METHODIST CHURCH,
BLAKELEY LANE,
DILHORNE,
STAFFORDSHIRE, ST10
2PS

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE
AND ALTERATION OF
FORMER METHODIST
CHAPEL TO OFFICE USE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Design and visual impact
- Neighbour amenity
- Impact on highway safety
- Protected Species

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is a former Chapel building. The building is a detached, pitched roof building, finished with red brick, stone sills, and slate roof. This is a visually prominent site with the building directly facing the A52 Kingsley Road, a busy main Road but opposite the junction with the A522. There is parking space within the site, to the sides and rear.



For the purposes of planning policy consideration, the application site is located within the open countryside and is bound by agricultural fields. The site is not within any Conservation Area and there are no Listed buildings/structures or protected trees which need to be considered.

PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the change of use from place of worship to offices, with internal alterations.

The initial plans proposed changing the IN and OUT arrangements for vehicles accessing and exiting the site. Due to concerns regarding visibility the arrangements are amended to revert back to the current points of entry and exit, maintaining the one way circulation through the site. The echelon parking space layout was amended to reflect this.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020)

SS1 Development Principles

1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

DC1 Design Considerations

T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

Supplementary Planning Guidance

1. Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands

Supplementary Planning Document

1. Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide

National Planning Policy Framework

Including sections -

2: Achieving sustainable development

6: Building a strong, competitive economy

9: Promoting sustainable transport

12: Achieving well-designed places

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/1987/0426 Extension to form W.C. and new septic tank - Approved 1987

SMD/1983/0936 New Roof to Kitchen – Approved 1983

SMD/1977/0308 Construction of entrance porch – Approved 1978

SMD/1977/0122 Extension to carpark and additional access onto the A52 Road at part of Mill House Farm, Dilhorne – Refused 1978

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 16 December 2022
Neighbour consultation period ends: 12/1/2022

Public Comments

No representations received during the determination period

Town / Parish Comments

No representations received during the determination period

SCC Highways

Initially request a drawing showing echelons amending to reflect current flow of traffic and for signage be on site to direct traffic flow in and out of site. Amended plan received. No objections subject to condition.

SMDC Ecology

Refer to requirements within: Planning Application Validation: Staffordshire Requirements For Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Including Criteria and Indicative Thresholds Revised: January 2011

Severn Trent

Informative information regarding sewer protection and how to access information.

SMDC Waste (Operational Services)

No issues regarding waste collections.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The site is within the countryside where there is general support for reuse of existing buildings subject to satisfying other material planning considerations. In this instance matters to consider include design and visual impact, neighbour amenity, parking provision, ecology, and highway safety.

The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development as being economic, social, and environmental. In accordance with policies SS1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, the Council will expect all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protecting, and where possible, enhancing the environment.

When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF.

The chapel building is located within the rural area, as identified by Local Plan policy SS10. The Local Plan supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, including conversion of existing rural buildings – development that is considered acceptable in principle, according with both local and national planning policy.

Design & Visual Impact

Policy DC1 refers to design and seeks to secure development of a high quality which is designed to add value to the area and to respect the site and its surroundings. New development should promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character, and appearance.

The NPPF requires the design of a development to add to the overall quality of an area, by being sympathetic to local character and by being visually attractive as a result of good architecture.

The Council's Design SPD outlines the Council's expectations in respect of design and states that 'alterations need to be undertaken with care. Insensitive changes can easily spoil a building...The aim is to revitalise the building without altering its fundamental character'.

The application raises no concerns in terms of either design or visual impact. The office use will be formed utilising the existing ground floor space, with a further three offices accommodated on the new mezzanine at first floor, accessed by an internal staircase to the rear of the building. The chapel building is not to be extended therefore retaining its simple form. Rooflights are proposed to be inserted within both roof slopes, but the number does not appear to be excessive considering the large roof plane area. The modest fenestration changes to two windows one on the rear and the other on the side elevation of the building is to lower high windows to become full height windows – considered functional and does not raise any concerns.

It is proposed to retain all boundary walls and to retain the parking area to the side and rear of the site, as shown on the proposed site plan.

It is for these reasons that the proposed conversion is considered to comply with policies DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

Amenity

There are no concerns in respect of neighbour amenity, the site is surrounded by fields creating a buffer of separation from the nearest residential properties. The application does not propose the enlargement of the building, rather, it relates to the conversion of the space within. Roof lights have been inserted but they raise no concerns in terms of any neighbour overlooking.

It is for these reasons that the proposed conversion will comply with policies DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

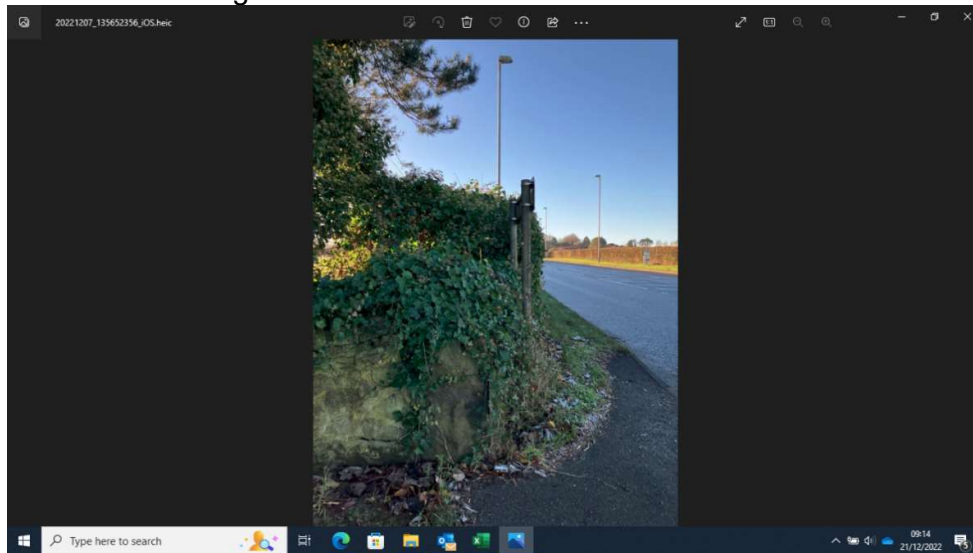
Highway Safety

The highway engineer requested that the direction of entrance and exit of traffic be unchanged from the “proven” circulation that has been operating for the chapel over many years. The reason given was because:

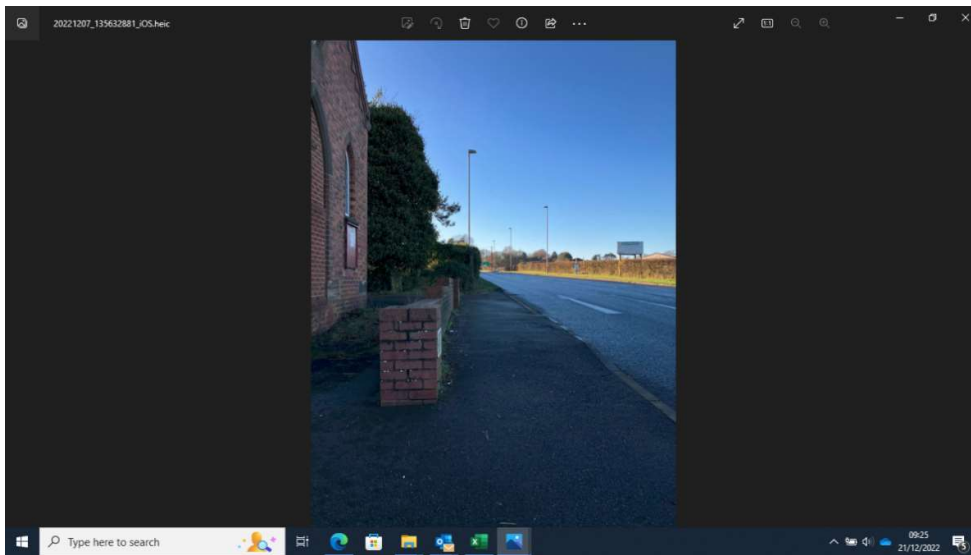
When exiting out of the current IN (turning right (east) and visibility to the left (west) was that bad that I would not exit out of it and reversed into the car park and out through the OUT, when (turning left (west) the visibility to the right (east) was better than when making that exit from the OUT. When trying to exit out of the IN visibility to the left (west) it had the worst visibility of all the options.

The OUT access is wider and therefore there is more room to manoeuvre for better placement of the vehicle. There is also better visibility of the Cheadle Road from the OUT access. It should be noted that the current arrangement of IN and OUT is existing and as such is considered “proven”.

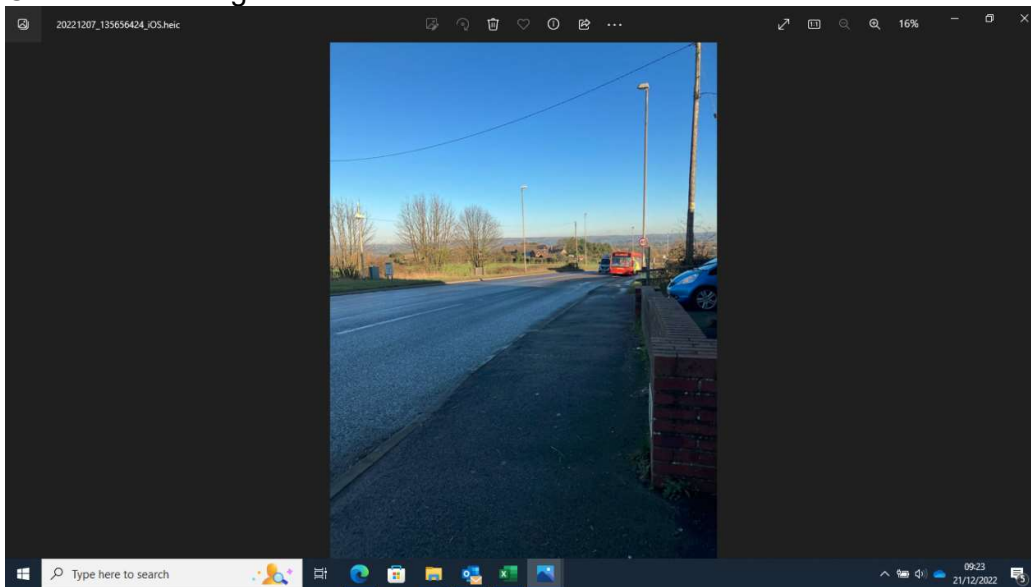
Current IN looking west



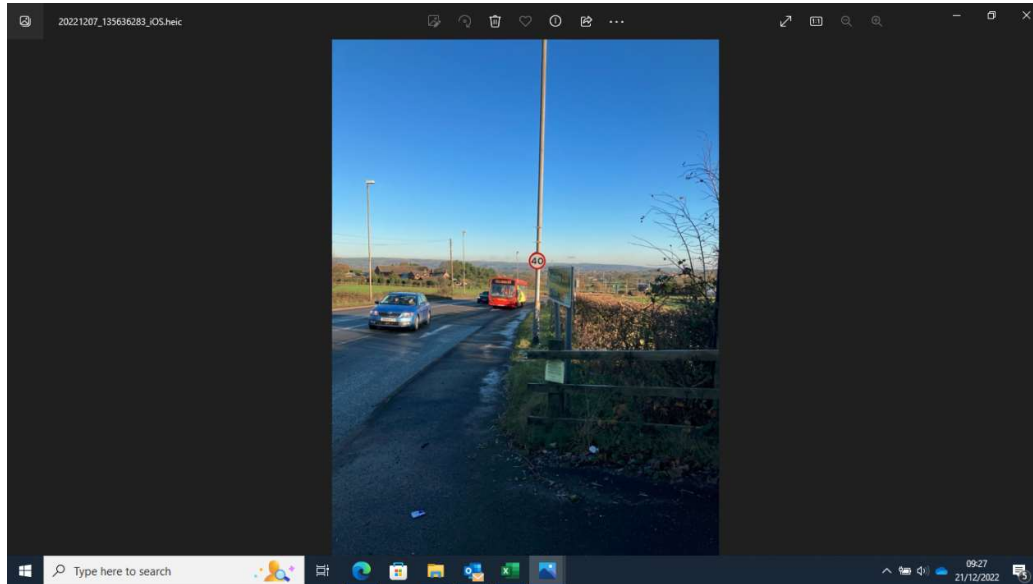
Current OUT looking west



Current IN looking east



Current OUT looking east



Highway Parking

Policies DC1 and T1 seek to achieve a level of parking and an access that is appropriate to the development it serves.

The previous use was a place of worship that catered for congregation parking.

The Highway Engineer has assessed the application and after initially raising a concern relating to the alteration to the direction of flow of traffic into and out of the site, amended plans have been received changing the echelon parking space layout. The direction of flow of traffic is now unchanged – in from the west access point and out through the east exit.

The amended proposed site plan raises no objection to the proposed development subject to a condition requiring that the parking layout, traffic circulation and signage on the approved plan be implemented prior to occupation for the lifetime of the development.

With the confirmed site layout, it is not considered that the proposed conversion will have a detrimental effect on highway safety. The development will therefore comply with policies DC1 and T1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

Ecology – Protected Species

A bat survey has been submitted as part of the application as required in accordance with the Planning Application Validation: Staffordshire Requirements For Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Including Criteria and Indicative Thresholds Revised: January 2011. Given the nature of the proposal the submitted survey is considered sufficient.

The initial survey identified a number of potential roosting opportunities, as a consequence 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 - a bat mitigation licence will not be required.

Nevertheless, a condition will be imposed requiring that the details of any proposed external lighting be submitted for approval, so as not to cause light spillage over the adjacent fields and hedgerows. An additional condition will require the addition of bat boxes on the building to secure a net gain to biodiversity, in accordance with the objectives of policy NE1 of the Local Plan. These are the precautionary suggestions within the submitted bat report and the application documents state that the applicant is agreeable to carrying out the development in accordance with these recommendations.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development is considered to accord with the relevant policies contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021). As such the application is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: Approved with conditions

Case Officer: P. Twigg

Recommendation Date: 13.1.2023

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council