DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT incorporating Planning Statement and Heritage Statement

Conversion of dwelling to 4 flats, regularisation of conversion of outbuilding to boiler room and hard and soft landscaping.

At Baptist Church
Westbury Leigh
Westbury
Wiltshire
BA13 3SU

For DLR (Chapel) Developments Ltd

1. Introduction

The application seeks full planning permission and listed building consent for the conversion of the dwelling in the former baptist church to four apartments, plus the regularisation of matters outstanding from previous works and planning consents.

The site currently benefits from a planning consent for 4 apartments at the rear of the site, plus a further dwelling within the chapel itself. The four apartments have been completed and are occupied. Works have commenced on the conversion of the baptist church to the dwelling, however these works have halted due to the cost of conversion and the unviable nature of the implemented scheme for one dwelling. The scale of the chapel building makes this dwelling unviable in light of the recent rise in the cost of living, most effectively demonstrated through the rise in heating costs. In addition building costs have risen due to supply issues brought about by the pandemic, which have not yet stabilised, to the point that the one dwelling conversion is not a viable option. Marketing of the property as a potential development has failed to elicit any interest due to the scale of the internal space, prior to the huge increase in fuel costs brought about by recent global events.

As a result this application sets forth a new scheme for conversion of the building to four apartments, in a manner that recognises the heritage of the building and respects the internal space.

A separate heritage statement will accompany this application to explain the concept behind the new layout and internal design.

2. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF is framed as a positive, responsive and enabling document, seeking to facilitate sustainable development and growth, supporting and securing, rather than impeding, sustainable economic growth and ensuring the planning system operates to this end; indeed, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. Applications for sustainable development should be approved wherever possible, consistent with an overarching approach that demands ‘a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It advocates a proactive, creative and solution-seeking approach to planning.

This proposal optimises the development potential of the site, whilst taking into account the density of the site surrounds and will provide a well-designed scheme that sits comfortably within the plot and will be in keeping with the appearance and massing of surrounding buildings and as such, is considered to be consistent with National Planning Policy.

Local Planning Policy

The following policies are recognised as particularly relevant to the proposal.

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)
CP1 – Settlement Strategy
CP2 – Delivery Strategy
CP32 – Spatial Strategy Westbury Community Area
CP50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
CP57 – Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
CP58 – Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment
CP60 – Sustainable Transport
CP61 – Transport and New Development
CP64 – Demand Management
CP67 – Flood Risk

Saved Policies for the West Wiltshire District Local Plan (1st Alteration)
H16 Flat Conversions
U1a Foul Water Disposal

Planning History

18/04008/FUL & 18/04379/LBC Change of Use from D1 to C3. Conversion of the rear of the site (Sunday School) into four 1 Bedroom apartments and the front of the site (Chapel) into a 3 Bedroom house. Associated internal alterations. Also to include alterations to the block work walls at the front of the site between the listed gate piers to create additional parking.

19/09018/FUL & 19/09870/LBC Conversion of Baptist Chapel Building to four two bedroom apartments

Appeal APP/Y3940/Y/20/3247700 against the decision to refuse the above applications for 4 units.

The major points of contention concerned the effect on the significance of the listed building and the impact on the highway network as a result of the proposal. It had previously been agreed that no other community use for the site was viable and therefore residential was considered the most appropriate use in order to maintain the fabric of the historic building. This information was not brought forward by the two parties at appeal.

3. Layout

The full nature and concept behind the new layout will be set out in the accompanying heritage statement to follow. However, in essence the scheme looks to provide 4 two-bedroom flats but with more communal open space then the previously refused scheme.

Two flats on each floor, with the ground floor entrance enhanced by the retention of the original screen, with doors to each side leading to a semi-circular communal space with full height ceiling that leads to the central stair to the two first floor apartments. The semi-circular walls will be constructed of coloured glass, reflecting the feeling of stained glass entering the building and bathing the apartments in colour.

4. Scale & Appearance

There are no changes to the scale and appearance of the exterior of the building as a result of this proposal.

The outbuilding that has been repurposed as a boiler room has been repaired.

5. Landscaping

Landscaping works have been undertaken to terrace the grass slope to the north of the site. This involved the grading of the slope and insertion of dwarf timber sleeper walls to achieve the terracing. The effect is to provide a clean and semi-formal appearance that compliments the setting of the listed building. No graves were reported in the process.

6. Access

10 parking spaces are proposed. This was considered too few for the total size of the scheme on the previous application, however we consider that if all other issues have been addressed, in the interests of preservation of the listed building, there should be a consideration of the planning balance and the impact of the potential for a maximum of the equivalent to two parking spaces on the highway infrastructure.

Cycle parking can be provided within the development at a level of one space per bedroom.

7. Heritage Statement

Name: BAPTIST CHURCH. GATE PIERS
List entry Number: 1284948
Grade: II
Date first listed: 29-Dec-1950
Description:
Built 1796-7 while Robert Marsham was pastor. Altered, enriched and enlarged (with Sunday School etc) 1847-71. [VCH] Impressive building with single pediment front at angle to street and set back at a high level with ramped road approach above rubble stone retaining wall and inner (concrete) retaining wall to Churchyard giving effect of double terrace. Red brick with stone band at base of pediment, moulded stone coping with bracketted angle knee piece of stone. Semi-circular window in tympanum with plain stone surround and key block. 3 arched windows in similar surround on 1st floor, 2 similar windows on ground floor and double 6-panel central door in stone architrave with key block and surround of stone pilasters and cut brackets supporting cornice and pediment, with bedmould coved over brackets. Flanking walls to steps with moulded coping. The side elevations, English bond, have 3 arched windows and cogged eaves cornice. Secondary smaller block at back [Sunday School with 2 tall rectangular windows [glazing bar sashes with brick flat arches and low pitched slate roofs. 2 sets of square stone rusticated gate piers with moulded cap curved with fan and key ornament, at left hand and to right of concrete faced retaining wall. Interior of Church galleried with rounded corners to South-East; galleries with fielded panels and dentil moulding to cornice. Most of the C19 pews in situ. Mid C19 organ. Enriched cornice with egg and dart and patterned ceiling roses.

The former chapel building benefits from an implemented consent for conversion to a dwelling. The current proposal is to subdivide that dwelling into 4 apartments. The scheme has been designed so as to maximise the retention of the feeling of an open space, despite the fact that the building no longer serves a community, in as much as in planning terms it is now a private dwelling.

It is proposed to return the decorative screen to the front lobby and for the introduction of coloured glass in the semi circular wall that will be introduced internally to frame the central staircase. The glass will then wash the apartments in colour. The staircase will provide a feeling of depth to the communal space within the building, thus preserving this communal feeling for the new community that will be created within the building, namely the occupiers of the 4 apartments.

8. Conclusion

The proposal will provide 4 two bedroom apartments in a manner that is sympathetic to the historic nature of the building and providing quality shared space within the building to serve the community that will live within its walls.

As the current use of the building is residential, with 4 residential apartments being constructed and occupied in accordance with the previous planning consent that included the dwelling to be subdivided as part of this application, it is considered that the proposal centres on the planning balance between the retention of the building for future generations in a manner that makes upkeep of this large edifice viable and the loss of the sense of space within the building.

Surrounded by and attached to residential properties, being a dwelling itself, it is difficult to see how any other use could be accorded planning permission in order to preserve the building for the future without increasing highways impact or noise to the immediate neighbours, whilst also providing a viable financial model for the future upkeep of the building.

As residential use has already been accepted as the most viable financial option it is surely now the duty of all involved in the preservation of this building to ensure that a residential scheme that supports future upkeep of the building be considered and approved.

We therefore recommend this scheme to the Local Planning Authority for due consideration with the retention of the building at its heart.