

Item No. 2

Application Reference Number P/17/0484/2

Application Type:	Full	Date Valid:	16/03/2017
Applicant:	Mr Stephen Fletcher		
Proposal:	Conversion of building to form one dwelling.		
Location:	Queniborough Methodist Church Queniborough Road Queniborough Leicestershire LE7 3DG		
Parish:	Queniborough	Ward:	Queniborough
Case Officer:	Deborah Liggins	Tel No:	01509 634733

This application is brought before Plans Committee at the request of Councillor Grimley following the call in procedure as he is concerned about car parking and highway safety.

The Existing Site and the Proposal

The application site is the detached Methodist Church on the southern side of Queniborough Road and opposite the school. The site is located adjacent to dwellings and a detached double garage associated with No. 10 Queniborough Road. The property is red brick and slate and is set on the edge of but within the Conservation Area. The building is not statutorily or locally listed.

There is currently an area of hard-standing to the building's frontage beyond which are two timber bollards in the pavement signalling tactile paving at the traffic calmed point where pedestrians, including school children, cross the road.

All the existing ground floor windows in the building are currently obscure-glazed and there is an existing external disabled access ramp which is proposed to be removed together with an outside toilet.

The proposal would seek the conversion of the building to form a 3 bed dwelling by inserting internal partition walling and a partial mezzanine. Two bedrooms would be located on the ground floor towards the rear of the building together with a bathroom and utility room. A lounge and kitchen would be formed towards the front and a third and en-suite bedroom would be installed on the proposed partial mezzanine. The proposal also seeks to replace the glazing in the southern and eastern elevations to plain glass, retaining the obscure glazing on the western side. Otherwise, the proposal makes little change to the external appearance of the building, with the exception of the installation of a black stainless steel flue to vent the lounge multi-fuel stove.

A bin storage area is proposed behind a new 1.8m high screen and gate adjacent to the front of the building.

Proposed car parking was shown to the front of the building using the existing hard-surfaced area and the originally submitted plans indicated that this could provide 2 off street car parking spaces angled to the pavement. A single space parallel with the front of the building and the pavement could also have been possible. However, during the consultation process, it came to light that the highway boundary was incorrectly depicted and revised plans were received on 9th May 2017 correcting this. As a consequence, it is not possible to provide any dedicated off-street car parking to serve the proposed dwelling and potential occupiers would therefore rely on the availability of parking within the street. The existing dropped kerb to the west of the site frontage is to be retained. With the exception of 'Keep Clear' road markings on the northern side of Queniborough Road outside of the school, parking within the street is otherwise unrestricted.

The application is accompanied by a design and access statement which explains that the site is approximately 181 sq.m and that the church closed in 2012 but has been used for village meetings since. The original timber windows have been replaced with UPVC and the proposal seeks to remove these and reinstate timber windows and a solid 4 panel front door.

Development Plan Policies

Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028 Core Strategy

Policy CS1 – Development Strategy – sets out the priority locations for growth in the Borough over the plan period. It establishes a settlement hierarchy in which Queniborough is defined as an 'other settlement' in which small scale development within the defined limits to development will be acceptable in principle.

Policy CS2 – High Quality Design – sets out the design-related criteria for achieving high quality design. It includes reducing the impact of development to make it more resilient to the effects of climate change; well-designed streets and spaces and making sure development is of an appropriate quality to protect the amenities of people who live or work nearby. It will therefore be essential to consider the massing, height, landscape, layout and materials in new development.

Policy CS14 – Heritage – requires development proposals to protect heritage assets and their settings.

Policy CS25 – presumption in favour of sustainable development – sets out that the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning policy Framework. It pledges to work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions to approve development wherever possible to secure improvements to the economic, social and environmental conditions in an area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Saved Policies of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan

Policy EV/1 – Design – seeks to ensure a high standard of design for development which respects the character of the area, nearby occupiers, and is compatible in mass, scale, layout, whilst using landforms and other natural features. It should meet the needs of all groups and create safe places for people.

Policy ST/2 – Limits to Development – states that built development will be confined to sites within the Limits to Development.

Policy TR/18 – Parking Provision in New Development – seeks to ensure adequate car parking is provided to secure highway safety and minimise harm to visual and local amenities. The adopted standards are used as a starting point in assessing the level of provision and represent the maximum level.

Other Material Planning Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is a key thread throughout the document. Local authorities should approve applications that accord with development plans or where the plan is absent, outdated, silent or indeterminate, unless adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or specific policies indicate development should be restricted.

Planning should be plan led, proactively drive development, assume the default answer to development is yes, unless it compromises key sustainability principles. It should identify and then meet housing, business and other development needs, and respond to growth. A high standard of design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings should be sought.

The NPPF also states that the historic environment and its assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring and in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities should set out a strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment taking into account the desirability to sustain and enhance the significance of historic assets and the desirability of new developments to make a positive contribution to local character and the wider benefits conservation can bring. Development proposals should describe the significance of assets affected and local planning authorities should use assessments to consider impacts to heritage assets to avoid or minimise conflict.

Paragraph 132 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to consider the impact of a development on the significance of designated heritage assets, with great weight being given to the conservation of those assets. Paragraphs 133–134 and 140 go on to say that where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 32 sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe.

Planning Practice Guidance

ID 26 - Paragraphs 001-003 states that good design matters and what this can achieve through good plan making. Paragraph 004 notes that weight can be given to outstanding or innovative design and developments of poor quality design should be refused. Paragraph 007 states that planning should promote local character. New development should be integrated within existing surroundings.

The 6Cs Design Guide

The Highway Authority is one of 6 East Midland authorities that have adopted the Design Guide for new development. The guide contains in Section DG6 – Public Transport, advice that pedestrian access to bus routes should generally, in urban areas, be a maximum of 400 metres and desirably no more than 250 metres from proposed development. In rural areas the walking distance should not be more than 800 metres.

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Consolidates previous legislation relating to special controls in respect of buildings and areas of special architectural or historic merit. The legislation gives Local Planning Authorities a statutory duty to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Leading in Design (SPD)

Seeks to encourage, promote and inspire higher design standards in new development throughout Charnwood and, amongst other things, at Appendix 4, sets out Space Standards for Residential Development.

Queniborough Conservation Area Character Assessment

This has the purpose of examining the historical development of the Conservation Area and describes its present appearance in order to assess its special architectural and historic interest. The appraisal is then used to inform the consideration of management and development proposals within the area. This development does not mention the application site but observes that predominant building materials are soft red brick and slate.

Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA)

The Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) has looked at a wealth of evidence, including population, household and economic growth projections, to assess the need for housing and employment land over the next 20 years. The study is an important part of the evidence base for the Strategic Growth Plan. It will also form part of

the evidence base for Local Plans and will feed into the Strategic Economic Plan being revised by the LLEP.

The HEDNA looks at projections based on past population and demographic trends, with adjustments made (where necessary) for higher migration to support economic growth, and/or to address affordability issues, responding to an analysis of market signals and evidence of the need for affordable housing. The HEDNA also identifies the appropriate mix of homes of different sizes needed in the market and affordable sectors and concludes that the ideal mix of market housing in Charnwood should be as follows:

- 1 bed – 0-10%
- 2 bed – 25-35%
- 3 bed – 45-55%
- 4 bed – 10-20%

This shows there is a need for family houses, such as the existing application property.

Relevant Planning History

P/80/1122/2 – Alterations to church layout by providing a screen between church and vestries and new entrance door – planning permission granted.

Responses of Statutory Consultees

Queniborough Parish Council is pleased to see proposals for the sympathetic conversion but is concerned about the parking for 2 vehicles shown on the submitted plans which is in close proximity to the designated school crossing.

The local highway authority originally referred to standing advice relating to car parking, access widths, dropped kerbs, surfacing, gates, street furniture and visibility. Upon the realisation that no off-street car parking could be provided, more specific comments were received as explained below. There is no objection to the scheme from a highway safety viewpoint.

Other Comments Received

Objections have been received from the following addresses:

- Queniborough Road – 10, 20
- Syston Road – 55
- Honeysuckle Close, East Goscote – 2
- Coppice Lane – 6
- Loddington Close Syston – 1
- New Zealand Lane - 42

Main concerns are:

- The site has insufficient car parking to meet the needs of a dwelling

- Drives to existing properties already blocked at school peak times and parents dropping off or collecting children park inconsiderately
- Pedestrian safety
- Additional hazards of construction vehicles during the conversion works

The head teacher of the Queniborough C of E Primary School has no objection to the principle of the use of the building as a dwelling. However concerns are expressed about the proposals on highway safety grounds, pointing out that a crossing patrol operates on Queniborough Road outside the application site area. Vehicles gaining access to the dwelling at peak times would endanger the safety of the children.

All correspondence and objections can be viewed in full on the planning file viewable via the Borough Council's website.

Consideration of the Planning Issues

The main issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:

- The principle of the development.
- Design and impact of the development on the significance of the heritage asset
- Impact on the residential amenities of neighbouring occupiers
- Highways issues.

The Principle of the Development

All planning applications must be considered on their individual merits in accordance with the development plan in place at the time unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this context, the application site lies within the Queniborough Limits to Development and although not specifically allocated for housing development in the local plan, Queniborough is an 'other settlement' considered suitable for limited new housing development, subject to design considerations. The application site is located on a bus route with and it is considered that the site is sustainably located in terms of the wider economic, social and environmental sense as defined in the NPPF. It is considered that there is a need for smaller family homes and that there would be economic and social benefits arising from the scheme. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable and accords with Policies CS1 and CS25 of the Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028 Core Strategy and Policy ST/2 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan.

The Design of the Building & Impact on Heritage Assets

The implications of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 on the principle for development have been set out in the relevant section above. In essence the Act requires local planning authorities to have "special regard" to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings. Any harm should be given considerable weight and this creates a presumption against the grant of planning permission to be weighed in the planning balance. For the presumption to be outweighed there should be a clear positive and material public benefit demonstrated by planning proposals to justify any harm to a designated heritage asset or its setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework identifies one of the core planning principles to underpin plan-making and decision-taking as being to “Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations” (Para 17). Further direction is provided by paragraph 132 which states that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Paragraph 134 goes on to provide that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”

The building was erected in the late 1800’s as a Methodist church but was closed in 2012 and placed on the open market in 2016. The proposal would see the conversion of the building to a dwelling and although internal partitions and a small mezzanine are proposed, the integrity of the original church hall, including the metal roof truss and gothic window above the main entrance would be retained. The proposal would also see the removal of modern UPVC windows and their reinstatement with more sympathetic timber ones. The proposal will also secure the long-term future of the building which might otherwise become ‘at risk’.

This part of the conservation area is characterised by buildings of different architectural styles derived from their past uses. Predominantly they are located at the back or close to the back of the pavement, creating a strong sense of enclosure to the street. Traditional architectural details of the buildings contribute significantly to the areas special character.

In accordance with the guidance contained in the NPPF, it is considered that the proposal which keeps external changes to a minimum and which reinstates sympathetic timber windows, maintains its character with certain elements of the proposal providing an enhancement to this character. This will result in a neutral impact on the character of the conservation and no harm to the heritage asset.

The public benefits of the scheme do not therefore fall to be considered in accordance with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

The Government’s aim is to promote high quality and inclusive design over the lifetime of developments, and require development to contribute positively to making places better for people. The submitted scheme is considered to be good quality in terms of its design and appearance and is in scale with its surroundings. The alterations to the building are relatively minor in nature and the replacement of the windows will be a positive enhancement to the site and its setting within the Conservation Area. The proposed development will provide an attractive street frontage by reason of its design, mass, scale and use of material, it is considered the proposal meets the requirements of central and local government policy relating to design quality and it is considered that the proposal generally complies with Policies CS2 and CS14 of the Core Strategy and Policy EV/1 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan.

The Impact on Residential Amenities

The proposal seeks to make no additional window openings into the walls of the existing building and retains obscure glazing in the replacement windows to be inserted in the western elevation adj to No. 20 Queniborough Road. Although two new roof lights are proposed, these will serve the mezzanine bedroom (rather than a principal room) and will be positioned with their lower cills 1.6m above floor level and because they are angled in to the roof slope, it avoids avoid significant losses of privacy to the dwellings either side. In these ways, the development will respect the residential amenities and, with no additional losses of light, will respect policies CS2 and EV/1.

Highway Issues

There is a limited site frontage of approximately 16 sq.m which because of its shape and depth and because of the later identification of the correct highway boundary, is now shown to be impractical to be used as car parking provision. The application is therefore proceeding to determination on the basis that no car parking provision can be made within the site to serve the needs of potential occupiers of the dwelling.

The previous use of the property as a church and the likely traffic that use would have generated (and indeed could be again if that use recommenced) is a material consideration in the determination of this application. It is also material that under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015, the current authorised use as a place of worship (Class D1) could be changed to a shop (Class A1), financial and professional services (Class A2), restaurant or café (Class a3) or business (Class B1) without the need for planning permission. All these uses have the potential to generate significantly more traffic movements to and from the site, including commercial deliveries, than the proposed lower key use as a single dwelling house. In these terms, although no provision is made for car parking, the proposal is considered to be acceptable having regard to the traffic activity which might otherwise be generated.

The local highway authority comments that Queniborough Road is an adopted classified C road which is subject to a 30 mph speed limit where there are no significant existing on street parking problems. The location of the property benefits from a local bus service which reduces reliance on the use of private cars and although there is no off-street provision for car parking associated with the proposal, this would not represent a highway safety concern. The local highway authority therefore advises that the residual cumulative impact of the development is not considered to be 'severe' in accordance with Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework and a highway reason for refusing the scheme could not be supported.

Whilst concerns have been expressed about additional hazards which may be caused through the movement of construction vehicles, this is a logistical matter for the applicant and their contractors. The usual duties for highway users to exercise due care and attention are not removed through the grant of any planning permission.

Conclusion

The site lies within the limits of Queniborough and is in a sustainable location for the scale of development proposed, having regard to Core Strategy Policy CS1, and would contribute to the Borough's housing land supply. On balance it is considered the proposal would not cause harm to visual or residential amenity, or highway safety. In line with the advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework para 134, it is also considered that the character of the Conservation Area would be preserved and that the development would not cause harm to identified heritage assets. The proposal is therefore considered to be sustainable development which accords with the NPPF as well as Policies CS2, CS14 and CS25 of the Core Strategy and saved Policy EV/1 of the Local Plan.

In the light of the above, it is recommended that planning permission is granted.

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant Conditionally

- 1 The development, hereby permitted, shall be begun not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.
REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 2 The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the details and specifications included in the submitted application, as shown on the drawings below;
Approved Drawings:
1454P01a - aerial photograph and site location plan - received on 9th May 2017
1454P04a - Proposed floor plans and site layout - received on 9th May 2017
1454P05 - Proposed elevations
P1454P06 - Proposed 3d visuals
REASON: For clarity and the avoidance of doubt and to define the terms of the permission.
- 3 The windows and doors to be used in the development shall be of timber construction.
REASON: To ensure that the completed development is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 4 The replacement windows in the western elevation shall be glazed with obscure glass which shall thereafter be retained at all times. Details of the glazing specification shall first be submitted for the approval in writing of the local planning authority. No changes shall be made to these windows nor shall any additional windows be inserted in this elevation thereafter.
REASON: To minimise the effect of the development on the privacy and

amenities of nearby residents.

The following advice notes will be attached to a decision

- 1 DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO THIS DEVELOPMENT - Policies CS1, CS2, CS14 and CS25 of the Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028 Core Strategy and Policies EV/1, ST/12 and TR/18 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan have been taken into account in the determination of this application. The proposed development complies with the requirements of these policies and there are no other material considerations which are of significant weight in reaching a decision on this application.
- 2 Planning permission has been granted for this development because the Council has determined that, although representations have been received against the proposal and it does not fully accord with the terms of Policy TR/18 the degree of harm that might be caused to one or more of the issues arising under the policy is insufficient to warrant the refusal of planning permission.
- 3 The Local Planning Authority acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process. This led to improvements to the scheme to secure a sustainable form of development in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- 4 In order to arrange for the delivery of the necessary equipment for participation in the refuse and recycling service and to ensure that the properties receive a collection service as appropriate, please contact Environmental Services on 01509 634538 or recycle@charnwood.gov.uk, before the first property is completed.
- 5 In addition, as the proposed development is located within a conservation area, the Council has considered whether it would enhance or preserve its character and appearance. Planning permission has been granted on the basis of the Council's opinion that the development would, at least, preserve that character.

