

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

In connection with change of use and conversion of Brookbottom Methodist Church, Brookbottom, New Mills, SK22 3AY

Reference: BBCDA01 Rev A

DESIGN STATEMENT: LOCAL AREA

The church is located within the Green Belt, and is situated in the Brookbottom Conservation Area which was designated in 1976. The Conservation Area is divided by the boundary between High Peak Borough Council and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council as is a small 2mtr strip running from east to west on the church site to the north of the current car park which will be remain unaffected by the proposed development.

Until 1990, the church formed part of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, following a Boundary Commission review it was transferred along with all of the properties in Brook Bottom into the Borough of High Peak.

The church has prominence in the hamlet given its elevated aspect and its social and religious significance in the area. The church is not a listed building but many of the surrounding older properties constructed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries are Grade II listed.

The north, east and south elevations of the church are clearly visible by the public from the road and local pathways and bridleways. The church and adjoining car park are located behind a mixture of grit stone walls and wire mesh fencing.

Neighbours in the hamlet were invited to an Open House event in April 2012 prior to this submission to view the detailed architectural drawings and artistic impressions. No objections to the plans were raised.

The proposed change of use will bring the use of the building in keeping with the surrounding properties and remove a cause of concern to the neighbours in having a disused and empty building close by their homes. Some minor vandalism has occurred to date, the latest incident occurring in June 2012, and slow material deterioration is evident to the stonework and timbers on the main chapel and vestry which exacerbates these concerns.

DESIGN STATEMENT: BUILDING & SITE ASSESSMENT

The planning application concerns the conversion of a former Methodist church to a single dwelling. The existing building is the former Primitive Methodist School Chapel, more recently known as the Brookbottom Methodist Church.

The building comprises of a single storey worship hall which was constructed in 1874. A vestry, kitchen and cellar area was added in 1883 and a toilet block to the rear sometime later.

The walls to the front elevation are dressed stone, and to the south and north elevations, random stone. The west elevations to the chapel and vestry are rendered stone. A structural engineer's report confirmed that the building is in good structural condition.

The rainwater goods are in poor order and comprise of a mix of plastic, cast iron and timber.

Existing pitched roofs are Welsh slate and are in good condition to the main chapel but some damage is evident on the vestry roof.

DESIGN STATEMENT: EVALUATION & DESIGN

The proposal provides a four bedroom single dwelling with a detached flat roofed garage and landscaped grass terraced garden. New dry gritstone faced walls will provide enhancement to the terracing which are designed to reflect the existing land levels on the steeply sloping site; the gritstone will be locally or on-site sourced. The existing trees which edge the current church car park will be retained.

Care has been taken to minimise the alterations to the external view of the building. All external materials used will be in keeping with the existing construction materials. The main building will remain generally unaltered externally to the east, north and south elevations.

In general, the walls have been inappropriately pointed with a concrete mix which where necessary will be removed and the walls repointed with lime mortar more in keeping and compatible with the stone.

The windows dating from c1950, have been damaged by water ingress and vandalism, these will be replaced with painted timber windows which will be contemporary in style to the original chapel. The windows will be a mixture of casement and fixed style.

The visual impact of a new first floor which is proposed to be introduced into the main worship hall will be minimised where it abuts the windows by the incorporation of sections of glazed flooring.

Low profile conservation windows will be added to the roof above the main worship hall and vestry area in line with the existing window apertures on the north and south elevations. Neither roof areas have been felted or insulated, both will be stripped and relayed re-using the existing slates and replacing with similar to match existing, sourced from a local reclamation yard.

The damaged and incompatible rainwater down pipes will be replaced with cast iron throughout which will be painted to be in keeping with the vernacular. Likewise, the gutters will be replaced with timber vernacular as originally fitted.

To the rear, the proposed garden room extension is modest in size, and from the bridleway, it presents an improved elevation to the public view as a replacement to the unsightly toilet block and oil storage tank. The garden room will reuse stone and slate from the toilet block. A self-supporting cantilevered balcony and associated awning is proposed to be constructed with minor visual impact or interferences to the public view or neighbouring properties owing to its orientation and design.

ACCESS STATEMENT

The church forecourt is currently accessed from the car park area by a concrete ramped approach via a break in the grit stone wall which is not original to the property and was created approximately 10 years ago. The proposal will reinstate this section of the wall making an unobtrusively visible break towards the rear to allow ease of access to the property from the car parking area. Proposed changes in levels in the current car park will remove the need for the ramped access to the building, providing access via means of two shallow steps as described above.

The proposed landscaping of the existing car park and the provision of a garage will allow for the parking and manoeuvring of a minimum of four vehicles to allow independent access and egress to the property. A maximum of eight vehicles would be being accommodated in total, albeit dependently.

Vehicular access to the site is proposed to be improved by widening the current entrance by 1mtr, repositioning and reinstating a portion of unstable dry stone wall to a maximum of 1mtr above ground level to improve visibility for exiting vehicles and passing walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

A drainage channel will be incorporated in the drive to remove the possibility of surface water run off onto the public road outside the property. A random cobble stoned area will provide hard standing at the entrance to the car parking area. Beyond the gated entrance the drive way and paths will be a dressed surface of gritstone chip and tar.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The proposed dwelling will incorporate insulation to reduce the U value of the walls, floors and windows within current building regulation guidelines.

Where possible, natural materials will be reused or sympathetically removed and offered to local reclamation yards and new materials will be sourced from sustainable sources.

ECOLOGICAL STATEMENT

The design for the proposed dwelling has been modified from the plan originally submitted in accordance with the advice received from an ecological consultant and licensed bat worker following the discovery of bats in the chapel roof space. This statement comments on the design implications only; a full bat survey has been produced and is submitted as part of this planning application.

The original proposed garden room to the rear of the property has been redesigned to incorporate a dedicated bat roosting loft area, together with an access grille. Bat boxes will also be provided to the southern and western elevations.

The proposed roof lights have been reduced in number to minimise potential upward light spill to avoid disturbance to commuting bats flying overhead. A fixed awning has been incorporated in the proposed garden room over the large windows on the western elevation to reduce upward light spill near the new bat roost entry point.

Plans for external lighting have been scaled back and will be restricted to low wattage lighting.

D. Clark

August 2012