HPK/2013/0295
HIGH PEAK
24 MAY 2013
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Pentland

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Conversion of former Church into six dwellings
Holy Trinity Church
School Road
Peak Dale
High Peak

John Scott BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI
Pentland Galliford Try

1 Introduction

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of the planning application for the conversion of the former Holy Trinity Church, School Road, Peak Dale into six dwellings. The application has been submitted by Pentland Galliford Try on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. T. and P. Bagshawe and is accompanied by plans prepared by Oldfield Design Limited.

1.2 The statement concludes that approval of a scheme the conversion of the former church into six dwellings would be in accordance with the planning policies set out in the High Peak Local Plan as it would involve the sympathetic conversion of a building within the "Built Up" area of an existing settlement. The statement also includes a design and access section, as required by Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and as set out in Circular 01/2006.

2 Application site and setting

2.1 The former Church of England Church of the Holy Trinity (Holy Trinity Church) is located on the western side of School Road, Peak Dale, to the north of Buxton. Peak Dale is a small village lying approximately 3 miles north-east of Buxton. The village is in a linear form with the majority of buildings closely lining School Road and Upper End Road which runs through the length of the village. The site lies approximately 150 metres from the junction of School Road and Batham Gate Road. The church sits between the school to the south and the houses on Church Lane to the north, this running as a cul de sac off School Road. No.12 School Road lies immediately to the north of the church. To the west of the church itself there is the church graveyard. At present this is accessed through the church yard.

2.2 Holy Trinity Church is a late Victorian building faced in random limestone building with a blue slate roof under red clay ridge tiles. The church has sandstone detailing in and around the windows, with sandstone tracery, string courses and copings. The external corners and longer walls of the building are supported by angle buttresses, also constructed from limestone with gritstone cappings. The building has a principal gable facing School Road, with a subsidiary gabled wing to the south and a smaller hipped

roof addition on the north-east corner. The rear wall of the main building is rendered. Internally there is only one floor level, although there is a small basement which extends beneath a small section of the church. There is a small stone-built detached shed in the southern corner of the site.

2.2 The church sits in the centre of a more or less square site. The main part of the site is surfaced with tarmac, which runs all the way around the building, but there are trees around the edges of the site, with a mature belt along the southern boundary. To the rear of the site there is a gate leading to the graveyard to the west. This is separated from the church yard by a hedge. The church is an attractive building typical of its period, but it is not a listed building and it is not within a designated Conservation Area.

2.3 As far as we are aware, there is no relevant planning history on the site. However, we have had pre-application discussions with a Borough Council Planning Officer (Sue Ashworth), with an exchange of letters in October and November 2008 about the principle of converting the church to dwellings.

2.4 We understand that the church was in use until 2003. It was used for the weekly congregational service on Sundays, together with other services. Due to a steady increase in the cost of the maintenance of the building, in particular with problems with damp in the walls and leaks in the roof and windows, the Church of England decided to stop holding services at Holy Trinity Church. Given the high cost of maintenance, the church body was considering demolition of the buildings as a way reducing costs. However, when the Church was originally built, the land on which it stands was bequeathed to the Church of England by the Bagshawe family on the agreement that once the Church was no longer required the land and the building would be returned to the Bagshawe family. The applicants, Mr T.J. and Mrs P. Bagshawe now seek to give the building a viable and sustained future by converting the building to residential use, whilst ensuring that the local community retains use of and access to the adjacent graveyard.

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 The proposed development involves the conversion of the existing building to six apartments/dwellings. The conversion would take place within the shell of the existing building, utilising existing opening as far as possible. To the rear of the church is a small, pitched-roof porch which will be removed to expose the original rear door of the church. This rear elevation has an existing rendered finish and this will be retained. This door will serve as access to most of the residential units including the rear ground floor unit and all those on the first floor which will be accessed by a new internal communal staircase. The other two ground floor units will have their own independent accesses making use of the two existing doorways on the front elevation. The conversion will create 6 no. new residential apartments with 3 no. one-bedroom units on the ground floor and 3 no. two-bedroom units occupying a new first floor, each with a gallery bedroom in the roof space. There would be no demolition of the existing building, other than the rear porch, and no extensions. Given the relatively sound condition of the existing building, we have not commissioned a structural survey. Whilst there are problems regarding the maintenance of the building as a Church, these problems are not yet so serious as to require a full structural survey or wholesale demolition and rebuilding.

3.2 Internally, as many architectural features as possible will be retained and the new walls and floors fitted within or around them so that the building can retain a visual reminder of its history as Church. There will also be minimal disruption to the existing internal fabric of the building with alterations to the existing stonework only made where necessary to permit the conversion and to allow the units to comply with the current building regulations.

3.3 Access to the graveyard to the rear would be maintained via a footpath along the southern boundary of the site, separated from the curtilage of the dwellings by a new metal estate fence. We understand that the church authorities have requested a footpath of sufficient width to wheel a coffin to the graveyard, but there is no need for a separate vehicular access from School Road.

3.4 Most of the trees, including all of the large mature trees on the southern side of the site will be retained. Several small trees and bushes will be removed to create car parking spaces and the hedge between the churchyard and the graveyard will be replaced with a limestone wall, built on a slightly different line so that some memorial stones can be within the graveyard.

3.5 There is relatively level access from School Road onto the site at present and this will be retained as part of this proposal. Due to the existing floor level and external ground levels it is not possible to provide level access into the building. Twelve parking spaces would be provided within the site (two spaces per unit).

3.6 The scheme is shown on drawing numbers 0892-01, 02, 04, 05, 06 and 07A, produced by Oldfield Design Limited, as follows:

- 0892-01 Existing Plans and Section
- 0892-02 Existing Elevations
- 0892-06 Existing Block and Roof Plan
- 0892-04 Proposed Plans
- 0892-05 Proposed Elevations and Section
- 0892-07A Proposed Block and Roof Plan
- Site Location Plan (1:2500)

4 Planning Policy

4.1 The Local Plan for the area is the High Peak Local Plan, adopted in 2005. We consider that the relevant policies are H1, H5, and CF2 which state:

"H.1 – Principles of Housing Provision:
Planning permission will be given for new housing, giving priority to:

- *the redevelopment of previously developed land in built up areas*
- *conversions and sub division of existing urban buildings*

Residential development on greenfield land (including renewals) will not be permitted except for dwellings approved under policies OC7, H2, H4 and H10 and where an

adequate supply of housing exists within a sub area to meet the structure plan housing provision, new residential development will only be permitted where it falls within one of the exceptional categories listed in the preamble above".

"H5 - Housing within the built-up area boundaries:

Planning permission will be granted for residential development, including the renewal of existing or recently expired permissions, on previously developed land within the built-up area boundary, provided that:

- *A significant source of local employment would not be lost, unless its continued use would be inappropriate; and*
- *The development will not unduly prejudice the continuation of an appropriate existing or proposed adjoining land use".*

The site falls within the Buxton sub–area for policy purposes.

CF2 - Local Community Facilities

Planning Permission will be granted for development, materially affecting a community building or site including the change of use of premises serving a local community, provided that:

- *the community value of the building or site will be maintained or enhanced through the proposed development; or*
- *the premises are no longer needed for local community use; or*
- *alternative provision of another site with the same or better facilities for the continuation of the service of the community is implemented*

5 Key Planning Issues

As set out above, this is an application for the conversion of the existing building to six apartments. The scheme is considered to be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing building, the application site, its setting, and to the amenity of adjacent buildings. Taking these matters into account, we consider that the development is in accordance with Local Plan policies H1, H5 and CF2.

5.1 ***Planning Policy:***

The principle of converting the existing building into residential units accords with Local Plan policy H1, which gives priority to "*conversions and sub division of existing urban buildings".* The site lies within the "Built Up" area of Peak Dale, as shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map. The conversion of the existing building, which a substantial building of some architectural and historic interest within the community is therefore acceptable in principle and desirable as a means of retaining the existing building. The development of the site by the sympathetic conversion of the existing building would be highly beneficial to the character and appearance of the site. With regard to Local Plan policy H5, the proposal would not result in the loss of a significant source of local employment nor would it unduly prejudice the continuation of an appropriate existing or proposed adjoining land use because the existing use as a church ceased several years ago. This is dealt with in the next paragraph.

5.2 Dealing specifically with Local Plan policy CF2, the use of the building as a church ceased around 2003 -2004. Since that time the building has remained vacant and redundant. Consequently the condition of the building has deteriorated and the church body was considering demolition as a means of resolving the problem. The Applicants were, however, in a position to acquire the building because the Bagshawe family initially gave the land to the church. The fact that no other use has been found for the church in the period of vacancy and the likelihood that it would otherwise be demolished demonstrates that there is no ecclesiastical use for the building and that no other community uses have come forward. As is often the case with relatively old buildings such as this, the cost of restoring the building for another use would be prohibitively expensive. A residential conversion is a suitable way forward in this instance, giving the building a beneficial use with no extension and few alterations. The use of the adjacent graveyard would be safeguarded by the provision of an access along the southern boundary.

5.3 ***Scale, Form and Design of the Proposed Development:***

As stated above in section 3, the proposal involves the conversion of the existing building into six units. The conversion would take place within the fabric of the existing

building, with no extensions and the removal of only the rear porch, which is a later addition and is in poor condition. The detailed plans produced by Oldfield Design Limited propose a sympathetic conversion with very few external alterations other than roof-lights. Former churches and chapels can sometimes be difficult to convert without major alterations or extensions, but this has been successfully avoided in this instance. The scheme respects the essential ecclesiastical vernacular qualities of the building. The internal space will inevitably be sub-divided, but the external appearance of the building would largely be retained. The setting of the building will be conserved, particularly because there would be no extensions to the building. The relatively modest level of accommodation (six units) means that the site would not be greatly altered and only twelve parking spaces are required.

5.4 ***Residential Amenity:***

The site lies between Peak Dale Primary School to the south and houses to the north. The disposition, height and design of the windows means that the conversion of the building to residential use will not have an adverse impact on the residential amenity and privacy of the dwelling (no. 12 School Road) to the north or on the dwellings on Church Lane, also to the north. The new footpath to the graveyard would run along the southern boundary, close to the school, so it would not have any impact on the amenity of either the proposed dwellings or any existing dwellings. This path would run through the relatively mature trees to the south of the site, with a metal estate fence separating it from the site. The existing hedge at the rear of the site would be replaced by a wall along a slightly different line in order to allow the memorial stones to be within the graveyard. The wall would ensure that the privacy and amenity of the proposed dwellings would be safeguarded and that there would be no conflict of interest between residents and visitors to the graveyard.

5.5 ***Highway and Access Matters***

In terms of vehicular access, this would be taken off the existing access from School Road. Given the original church use, it should not be necessary to alter the access, but minor improvements can be made if required by the Highway Authority. The site has ample car parking from its former use as a church, but the plans show twelve car parking spaces.

5.6 ***Ecology and Archaeology:***

There are no known features of ecological or archaeological interest on the site.

5.7 ***Flood Risk Assessment:***

Holy Trinity Church does not lie within a designated floor risk zone and therefore we consider that a flood risk assessment is not necessary.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, we consider that the proposed conversion of the former church into six sympathetically designed dwellings would result in the retention of this attractive building which is important in the history of the village and which should be retained through a beneficial alternative use. This would be in accordance with Saved Local Plan policies H1, H5 and CF2.

We therefore ask that you approve this application. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Oldfield Design Limited if you wish to discuss the application.

John Scott BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI
Head of Planning
Pentland Galliford Try