

# Redevelopment of the former Peak Dale Methodist Church

## Planning Statement

### Introduction

1. The Methodist Church in Peak Dale was formally closed earlier this year. The small and dwindling membership could not sustain the scale of repairs and on going maintenance required. Existing community group users of the premises were invited to submit proposals for its continued use but there were no workable suggestions.

2. The Buxton Circuit of the Methodist Church wishes to dispose of the building and site on behalf of the owners, the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. It is obliged by its charitable objects to seek the best return on the property.

3. The building's condition and suitability for conversion have been reviewed by the architects and by Mr Roger Lee of Wright Marshall. Residential use was considered the only option as there is no viable commercial interest in such a property in Peak Dale. Architectural and valuation opinion concluded that conversion of the main building would be difficult and expensive. The dimensions of the building would only allow the creation of relatively large units for which there is no perceived market in Peak Dale. The 20 th century extension to the rear was unsuitable for retention.

A report which satisfies the provisions of the Charities (Qualified Surveyors Reports) Regulation 1992, required under section 119 of the Charities Act when selling charity land, concluded that demolition of the building and redevelopment of the site for residential use was the best option.

### Planning Policy

4. National policy and local policy (both old and emerging) acknowledges the pressing need to provide sufficient land for new housing to meet planned levels of growth and to locate new development in appropriate settlements. The submission version of the new local plan includes land at Batham Gate, Peak Dale. That is taken to mean that the council regard Peak Dale as suitable for some new housing. The site of the Methodist Church is closer to the centre of the village than the proposed allocation

### Site and surroundings

5. The church is surrounded by residential areas dating for the most part from the late 19 th century. The form is predominantly terraces of two or two and a half storeys. Many properties have been extended to the rear. The density of built form is noticeably high. This can be seen on the plan and photographs provided.

### Approach to the scheme

6. The church building sits back from the road roughly 9 metres behind a tarmac area used for access and parking. This set back is retained in the proposed layout which has two short terraces of three units - one over the footprint of the main church building and the other at the back of the site. The block nearest to the road is proposed as 2 storey. The one at the rear as 2.5. The latter reflects the adjacent housing on New Street which is also somewhat elevated above the proposal site.

7. All the council's standards for housing layout are met. The proposed access is a few m to the east of the existing one and meets the highway authority's requirements.

8. The layout is straightforward with the front block sitting gable-on to the road, as does the existing Church building, and the rear terrace at right angles.

9. The area in front of the block nearest the road is proposed to be a shared communal space in the form of a formal garden walled with stones and windows from the church building. This will make a strong connection to the former use of the site and provide an unusual and attractive area. It is proposed to secure this via the conveyance on the land rather than through a planning condition. However a suitably condition to that effect would be acceptable if the council think it appropriate.

### Impacts

10. The traffic impact is not likely to be material given the levels of use of the road observed on several site visits at different times of the day and year. The form of the proposed development is closely matched to that of the surrounding part of the village. The building mass is appreciably less than that of the existing church building. Materials, detailed design and appearance are all reserved matters to be determined by a subsequent application.

11. There is little green space on the site and very limited capacity for habitat of bio diversity interest. The proposed gardens and communal space will represent a net increase in green areas and the potential they have to accommodate wildlife.

12. The one exception is the question of bats. It is likely that there are bats in the church building, though none have been observed. A survey was not possible this year due to timing. It will be undertaken next year. Suitable provision can be made within the new construction for bat roosting and accommodation as necessary. This is a matter for the detailed design process that will take place if outline consent is granted.

13. It is hoped that the council will feel able to support this proposal. It will bring six appropriately sized and designed houses to the village to help meet local housing needs. It will have no adverse impact on the character of the area around the site. It will result in less built form on the site, a more open aspect, increased green space and bio diversity and, through the communal garden space will retain a connection with the history of the site and the role played by the Methodist Church in the life of this community.

14. The funds realised by the sale of the site in this way will support the work of the Buxton Circuit of the Methodist Church in its various buildings in Buxton and the surrounding villages. These Churches play an important role in providing convenient and safe premises for use by a wide range of local groups and organisations as well as for religious services. This is an important commitment to promote the good of the wider community and has been a defining characteristic of Methodism from its earliest origins.

Richard Silson BA MA MRTPI  
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Annex 1 – photographs



The proposed front terrace is 2 storey, is set back the same distance as the porch and sits gable-on to the road, to reflect the historic pattern and prevent overbearing



The rear terrace is proposed as 2.5 storey and sits at right angles to the front terrace and to properties on New Street, which are somewhat elevated