

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

HPK/2023/0140
Valid 09/06/2023

CHINLEY CHAPEL,
UNNAMED ROAD FROM
A624 TO MALCOFF, THE
WASH, CHAPEL-EN-LE-
FRITH, DERBYSHIRE

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT
FOR INTERNAL WORK. WE
ARE SEEKING PERMISSION
TO REMOVE A COUPLE OF
PEW BENCHES (WHICH WE
WILL KEEP SAFELY), TO
CREATE A DISABLED
ACCESS IN THE CHAPEL
(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT -
ALTERATION)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon Listed Building

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site relates to detached chapel which is located within the open countryside, within the Green Belt, as defined by the Local Plan Policies Map. The building is a Grade II* Listed Building, known as Chinley Independent Chapel. The official Listing identifies the building as:

GV II Independent chapel, formerly non-conformist meeting house. 1711. Coursed gritstone rubble with flush gritstone dressings and quoins. Stone slate roof. Stone coped gables with moulded kneelers. Stone gable end bellcote to west, weathervane to east gable. Six bays.*

South elevation - arched doorcase with keystone and chamfered quoined surround to west. Original studded wooden door To east five two-light flush mullion windows, chamfered to top and bottom. Easternmost window with semi-circular top, others flat headed. Flat stringcourse over. Six windows above. Two central ones with arched heads, others flat headed, mullioned windows, as below. Continuous plain band at impost level. All windows have original leaded lights. To rear, eastern chimney, square at base, rising to octagonal with embattled top.

Interior- galleries to south and west supported by plain iron columns. Wooden galleries have raised and fielded panels with dentilled moulding below. To east, organ. On north wall a centrally placed early wooden pulpit with stairs to east side. Flat balustered stairs to galleries at east and west. Under southern gallery incised decoration in plasterwork and inscribed 'John Mellor, George Mellor 1711'. Three charity plaques of 1751, 1765 and 1782

PROPOSAL

This application seeks Listed Building Consent for internal alterations to the building. The works relate to the removal of 2 pew benches and modification to the pew doors with hinges. The proposal is to provide seating within the chapel which is accessible for wheelchair users. The removed pews would be stored for future re-use.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

High Peak Local Plan (Adopted 2016)

S1 Sustainable Development Principles
S1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
EQ6 Design and Place Making
EQ7 Built and Historic Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

High Peak Design Guide (2018)

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 12: Achieving Well-designed Places
Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 02/08/23
Neighbour consultation period ends: 20/07/23
Press Advert: 20/07/23

Public Comments

None received

Town / Parish Comments

Support Proposals

Historic Buildings and Places (formerly Ancient Monuments Society)

This is a commendably sensitive and limited proposal and we raise no concerns. The only loss will be of the seating itself and even there two seats will be moved to the perimeter of the new space. The "shell" of the boxpews, so important to the internal

character of this listed building, will remain to all visual intent, unaltered. We presume that there will be appropriate conditions about "making good" after the resiting of the seats.

The Georgian Group

The Group has carefully considered these proposals and has no objection in principle to the scheme. If your authority is however minded to grant consent, we would suggest that a recording condition, and a condition relating to where any historic woodwork which will be removed is to be stored, are agreed.

Historic England

Historic England have concerns regarding the proposed removal of box pew benches from the interior of the chapel which represents less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed chapel. Furthermore, the application does not include sufficient information to allow suitable determination of the application.

Chinley Independent Chapel is one of the earliest buildings in the settlement of Chapel Milton, built on the edge of the development during the early 18th century. The chapel was built in approximately 1711 following the need for a purpose-built chapel for the non-conformist congregation set up in 1662 by William Bagshaw, entitled the 'Apostle of the Peak'. The building is likely to be associated with the Sunday School, Old Manse and Manse Cottage. The interior of the chapel reflects the architectural style of the first quarter of the 18th century. The historic box pews are still extant across the ground floor of the building facing toward the pulpit in the centre of one elevation. The upper floors, accessed by a timber staircase, are supported by iron columns with timber raised and fielded panels to the balustrade topped by a cornice and with a dentil decoration below. Overall, the interior is subtle yet striking in its detail. For these reasons it has been listed as Grade II*, one of the top 8% of listed buildings in England.

The proposed removal of two of the existing box pews constitutes less than substantial harm to the significance of Chinley Chapel. The box pews are probably contemporary with the construction of the chapel in 1711, they are a notable feature in the building and constitute part of the surviving interior which is of remarkable quality. It is noted from the Heritage Impact Assessment that these pews have possibly been relocated in the chapel, however, they remain extant, and this is the foundation of their significance.

Historic England does not object to the need of the chapel in creating accessible seating and space to accommodate all members of the congregation and visitors, however, the removal of these pews would result in a detrimental loss to the character of the building and a negative impact upon its significance.

The application does not include a Heritage Impact Assessment which provides an appropriate assessment of the significance of the Grade II* listed chapel as well as the significance of the interior features which includes the box pews. Furthermore, the assessment of the proposed formation of accessible seating does not include

alternative options to their removal or a contextual understanding of the space to support why this is the only location for the proposed seating.

Your authority should determine the application on the basis of a sound assessment of the significance of the chapel and its interior, including the contribution the significance of the building. This should be considered in conjunction with alternative options for providing accessible seating. The relevant parts of the National Planning Policy Framework include paragraphs of 194 and 195 for the sufficiency of assessment, and paragraphs 197, 199 and 202 for consideration of the justification, great weight and balance against public benefits.

Historic England have concerns regarding the removal of the two 18th century box pews which are an important element in the architectural and historic significance of the chapel. The need for accessibility in this building is acknowledged, however, a proper assessment of the significance of the building and pews, as well as options for alternatives to removal should be provided in order for the local authority to make a balanced decision.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 194, 195, 197, 199, 202 of the NPPF.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice.

Conservation Officer

Objection.

Although I do not oppose requirements for accessible spaces, the Heritage Statement (whilst in itself is limited); does not include an Impact Assessment to thoroughly justify this project.

Small box pews are now a rare surviving feature of historic churches and chapels, as many were lost during the Reformation with the earliest version being recorded as before 1577. In assessing the significance of the box pew, or 'pue' it is noted the modestly primitive feature is legible evidence of date, and therefore build dates of the structures they reside within. This consequently is part of their significance. Many later derivatives of the pew became more and more ornate, carved or with glass, larger, longer, naturally along with their buildings. Meaning by the Georgian and Victorian eras they overwhelming dominated the church interiors and became almost the main feature. The craftsmanship a reflection of the community and of the vernacular, and in writing are noted as being symbols in themselves.

There is lack of information provided in regard to the overall floorplan and sizes of the space, in order to ascertain whether this is the best suited location and best course of action. Through this, exploration to mitigate or prevent harm on the

heritage asset is not seen to form part of the proposal. The statement that the pews will be kept in storage does not solely prevent or justify the physical harm to the fabric nor harm imposed on the asset.

The plans show a focused sketch looking at the area chosen for alteration, and unfortunately not much more. The isometric drawings show the pew boxes to be below a floor level or floor slab though am not sure what this is denoting. The existing plans also do not show how they are attached to the flooring or how they will be removed.

From preliminary investigation the floor plan is quite unusual in its orientation, due to the footprint of the building. This is another factor forming part of the significance. I am aware of the very close proximity of the steps, doorway and window in relation to these initial pews and narrow aisle, and I am not confident that this will be a low level intervention. Due to this I am concerned there would be cumulative impact through the alteration of the layout of the ground floor. Subsequently this equates to harm imposed.

As it the scheme stands I cannot offer full support and I advise further investigation into the best method of approach to this project and further exploration into the location of this scheme. I would also encourage more detailed drawings perhaps with annotations in order to provide more context.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on Listed Building

S.16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires, when considering applications for Listed Building Consent, that special regard be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Local Plan Policy EQ7 states that the Council will conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment. Particular protection will be given to designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings.

NPPF paragraph 199 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Para 200 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

The main consideration in this instance is whether the proposed works would cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset. The application has been supported by a short Heritage Statement, design and access statement, along with plans which demonstrate the works proposed. Both Historic England and the Conservation Officer have raised concern over the adequacy of the heritage statement in demonstrating the impact that the development would have on the Listed Building.

The scheme proposes the removal of two pews within the chapel.

Both Historic England and the Conservation Officer have highlighted the significance of the Listed Building, which lies within its cultural and historic importance, along with the architectural detailing, particularly internally. Historic England have advised that *“The interior of the chapel reflects the architectural style of the first quarter of the 18th century. The historic box pews are still extant across the ground floor of the building facing toward the pulpit in the centre of one elevation”*, and that along with other internal detailing, *“the interior is subtle yet striking in its detail”*. The Conservation Officer advises that *“Small box pews are now a rare surviving feature of historic churches and chapels, as many were lost during the Reformation with the earliest version being recorded as before 1577. In assessing the significance of the box pew, or ‘pue’ it is noted the modestly primitive feature is legible evidence of date, and therefore build dates of the structures they reside within”*.

The existing pews form an important part of the significance of the Listed Building.

The removal of the pews would result in the loss of historic fabric of architectural importance. Again, both Historic England and the Conservation Officer have raised concern about the negative effect that this would have on the significance of the heritage asset. The LPA have been advised that there has been insufficient information provided within the application which assesses the impact on the heritage asset and to justify the proposals. The submission does not include any exploration of alternative options.

It is acknowledged that the pews would be kept in safe storage, however this would not justify the removal of fabric of historic interest. Further, it is also noted that the works would be required to provide accessible accommodation for wheelchair users, however without detailed justification and the exploration of alternative options this benefit would not outweigh the harm to the historic building.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed works to the Listed Building are unacceptable and would cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset with insufficient benefits to outweigh the harm.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The application seeks consent for works to a Listed Building and it is considered that the works would harm the significance of the Grade II* heritage asset. The proposals are considered to affect internal features of special architectural and historic interest. As such, the application is recommended for refusal.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

Case Officer: Declan Cleary

Recommendation Date: 02/08/2023

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of High Peak Borough Council