

**20 DCNW2003/2717/F - REPLACEMENT OF FORMER  
METHODIST CHAPEL WITH TWO BEDROOM  
COTTAGE AT METHODIST CHAPEL, BACON LANE,  
AYMESTREY, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 9ST**

**For: Mrs Willmett per Mundy Construction Services,  
5 Upper Court, Luston, Leominster, HR6 OAP**

**Date Received:**  
8th September 2003

**Ward:**  
Mortimer

**Grid Ref:**  
42464, 64909

**Expiry Date:**  
3rd November 2003

Local Member: Councillor Mrs O. Barnett

### **1. Site Description and Proposal**

- 1.1 The former Methodist Chapel occupies a prominent and elevated position on the western side of the A4110 at the southern end of the village of Aymestrey. It is accessed via a private unmade track (Bacon Lane) which is shared with the Clerks House farmyard and 4 other properties immediately adjacent to the application site as well as a number of others further to the west.
- 1.2 The application site lies in open countryside which is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value. The Methodist Chapel itself is not listed and is clad in painted corrugated iron. Its outward appearance is a little dilapidated but it retains some very attractive features such as the Gothic style windows and the scalloped and pierced bargeboard details.
- 1.3 The building sits within a restricted curtilage demarked by a retaining wall and its recent use has been as the applicants own hobby workshop.
- 1.4 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the former Chapel building and its replacement with a two storey - two bedroomed cottage which would be of brick construction under a Welsh slate roof. The cottage would have an 'L' shaped form and the intention would be to re-use the existing arched windows within the new build.
- 1.5 Furthermore it is proposed to extend the curtilage of the building to provide a sizeable garden to serve the proposed property. This would encompass the disused quarry to the west of the chapel and within this area parking and turning space would be provided.
- 1.6 The application has been accompanied by a market testing appraisal.

### **2. Policies**

#### **Hereford & Worcester County Structure Plan**

- H16 A Housing in Rural Areas
- H20 Housing in Rural Areas Outside the Green Belt
- CTC 2 Areas of Great Landscape Value
- CTC 9 Development Requirements
- CTC 13 Conversion of Buildings
- CTC 14 Conversion of Buildings

**Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)**

- A1 Managing The District's Assets And Resources
- A2(D) Settlement Hierarchy
- A9 Safeguarding The Rural Landscape
- A19 Other Buildings Worthy Of Retention
- A24 Scale And Character Of Development

**Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft)**

- H7 Housing in the Countryside Outside Settlements
- LA2 Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
- HBA 8 Locally Important Buildings

**3. Planning History**

- 3.1 NW2000/3001/F - Replacement of former chapel with 2 bedroom cottage - Refused 5 January 2001.
- 3.2 NW2001/0948/F - Replacement of former chapel with 2 bedroom cottage - Withdrawn 16 July 2001.

**4. Consultation Summary**Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Head of Engineering and Transportation raises no objection subject to a condition requiring the proposed access and turning area being provided and maintained for such purposes.
- 4.2 Environment Agency raise no objection subject to a scheme for the provision of foul drainage being submitted for approval by the local planning authority.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.3 Chief Forward Planning Officer does not support the application on the basis that notwithstanding the marketing exercise undertaken by the applicant the proposal is for a new dwelling in the countryside which would not satisfy Plan Policy.
- 4.4 Chief Conservation Officer does not support the demolition of the former chapel since it will result in the loss of an attractive example of a prefabricated Victorian building which makes a positive contribution to the approach to Aymestrey and is an important part of its local history. It is advised that the re-use of the existing windows in a new-build project would not be permissible under current Building Regulations and that the use of brick is not considered appropriate in this case having regard to the character and appearance of the existing Chapel building.

**5. Representations**

- 5.1 Aymestrey Parish Council state :

'At a recent meeting of the Council, the following comments were made with regard to the above planning application:

- 1. The application does not conform to the local development plan.

2. The access onto the A4110 is a shared access via a privately owned lane with five other properties and a mobile home. It is to be hoped that the agreement of all residents to its use would be gained before any building work is undertaken.

3. The above-mentioned access is already a poor access and additional vehicles using this entrance/exit would increase the element of danger. Previous applications to renovate this property have not been supported by this Council for this very reason. Council therefore recommends that a full site visit be carried out by representatives of the Herefordshire Council planning authority prior to reaching any decision.'

5.2 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

## **6. Officers Appraisal**

6.1 The key issues for consideration in respect of this application are as follows:

- a) the principle of demolishing the Chapel structure and replacing it with a new dwelling;
- b) the impact of the proposed new dwelling upon the character and appearance of the Area of Great Landscape Value and;
- c) the demolition of a building worthy of retention.

### Principle of Residential Development

6.2 The application site lies within open countryside and as such any proposal for new residential development must be assessed against the criteria set out in Policy A2(D) of the Leominster District local Plan (Herefordshire). In exceptional circumstances residential use will be granted where it is essentially required to support an agricultural or forestry enterprise, it results from an acceptable conversion of an existing building, it is an appropriate replacement of an existing dwelling or it relates to a scheme of affordable housing where a local need has been established.

6.3 It is acknowledged that the marketing enterprise has not identified any obvious commercial re-use and this would enable support to be given to the conversion of the chapel. However this would not justify the demolition of the building and its replacement with a new dwelling which would be wholly contrary to Policy A2(D) of the Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire).

6.4 Furthermore, it is advised that the proposal would not fall into any of the exceptional circumstances identified above.

### Character and Appearance of the Area of Great Landscape Value

6.5 The replacement building is of an appropriate scale being closely related in position, size and form to the existing Chapel building and overall it is considered that the extended residential curtilage and parking area with appropriate controls could be accommodated without causing significant harm to the character and appearance of the locality. In view of the scattering of residential properties in the vicinity of the application site the presence of additional domestic paraphernalia would not therefore cause demonstrable harm to the character of the Area of Great Landscape Value.

Demolition of a Building Worthy of Retention

- 6.6 It is advised that the Chief Conservation Officer has indicated that the Chapel (although slightly dilapidated) represents an attractive example of a prefabricated Victorian building, which whilst not listed is certainly worthy of retention and locally an important historical feature. Accordingly, it is advised that a strong presumption in favour of the adaptation of the existing building has been expressed at this stage.
- 6.7 Set against this, the refusal of planning permission for a very similar application (NW2000/3001/F) does not refer to the architectural significance of the building and as such whilst the comments of the Chief Conservation Officer are acknowledged it is not considered reasonable to introduce this particular issue as a reason for refusal at this stage.
- 6.8 Notwithstanding the above further advice is offered that the proposed use of red brick is not considered appropriate and that should this proposal be accepted in principle a rendered finish should be encouraged in view of the prevailing character of the Chapel.

Conclusion

- 6.9 In conclusion therefore it is advised that whilst positive steps have been taken by the applicant to market the building and produce a design which reflects to some extent the scale and form of the existing Chapel, the principle of building a new dwelling on the site to replace the existing structure is contrary to policy.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That planning permission be Refused for the following reason :**

- 1. The proposal would result in the erection of a new dwelling in the open countryside, which in the absence of any exceptional circumstances, would be contrary to Policies H16A and H20 of the Hereford & Worcester County Structure Plan and Policy A2(D) of the Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire).**

Decision: .....

Notes: .....

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**Background Papers**

Internal departmental consultation replies.