

7 DCNW2004/2895/F - CONVERSION OF FORMER METHODIST CHAPEL INTO DWELLING. MINOR EXTENSION TO SOUTHWEST CORNER OF EXISTING BUILDING AT THE METHODIST CHAPEL, BACON LANE, AYMESTREY, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 9ST

For: Mrs E Willmett per Mundy Construction, 5 Upper Court, Luston, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 OAP

Date Received:
4th August 2004

Ward:
Mortimer

Grid Ref:
42466, 64911

Expiry Date:
29th September 2004

Local Member: Councillor Olwyn 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 adaptation and extension of the former Chapel building to create a two-bedroomed property which would have a rendered external finish with a natural slate roof. It is intended to retain the majority of the existing windows but two would need to be removed in order to facilitate the addition of the extension and provide an entrance door. A new floor would be introduced and it is proposed that this floor will be set back from the existing side elevation in order to reduce its visual impact when seen through the existing lancet windows. The proposed extension would be positioned on the rear corner of the existing Chapel building and would accommodate a bedroom and sitting room.
- 1.5 The proposed garden curilege has been reduced and no longer includes the disused quarry but still makes use of an existing access to provide an entrance to the proposed conversion.
- 1.6 The application has been accompanied by a market testing appraisal.

2. Policies

Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan

H16A – Housing in Rural Areas
H20 – Housing in Rural Areas Outside the Green Belt
CTC2 – Areas of Great Landscape Value
CTC9 – Development Requirements
CTC13 – Conversion of Buildings
CTC14 – Conversion of Buildings

Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)

A1 – Managing the Districts Assets and Resources
A2(D) – Settlement Hierarchy
A9 – Safeguarding the Rural Landscape
A19 – Other Buildings Worthy of Retention
A24 – Scale and Character of Development
A60 – Conversion of Rural Buildings Outside Settlements to Residential Use

Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft)

H7 – Housing in the Countryside Outside Settlements
LA2 – Landscape Character and Areas Least Resilient to Change
HBA8 – Locally Important Buildings
HBA13 – Re-Use of Rural Buildings for Residential Purposes

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Re-Use and Adaptation of Traditional Rural Buildings

3. Planning History

NW2003/2717/F - Replacement of former Methodist Chapel with two-bedroomed cottage. Withdrawn 27 January 2004.

NW2001/0948/F - Replacement of former chapel with 2 bedroom cottage - Withdrawn 16 July 2001.

NW2000/3001/F - Replacement of former chapel with 2 bedroom cottage - Refused 5 January 2001.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 Environment Agency submit a HOLDING OBJECTION until details of a proposed foul drainage system are submitted but indicate that if the local planning authority are minded to approve, a suitable condition regarding foul drainage should be attached.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Head of Engineering and Transportation raised no objection.
- 4.3 Chief Forward Planning Officer advises that notwithstanding the market testing appraisal, the proposal appears to involve extensive alterations and reconstruction which would be contrary to Government Guidance, Adopted Policy and the Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 4.4 Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards raise no objections.
- 4.5 Chief Conservation Officer does not consider this an appropriate conversion since it involves an extension to the building and the rendering of the external elevations thereby changing the character of the building.
- 4.6 Minerals and Waste Officer raises no objection.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Aymestry Parish Council raise no objection and support the sensitive conversion of the building.
- 5.2 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Central Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The site has been the subject of a number of previous applications which have either been refused or withdrawn due to a likely recommendation of refusal. Previous schemes have entailed the replacement of the existing structure with a new building and these have been strongly resisted since they were tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling in the open countryside.
- 6.2 The current proposal, which has been the subject of discussion and revisions comprises a hybrid of conversion and new build and as such differs materially from previous applications.
- 6.3 Revisions have been made to the proposals for the existing building although the applicant has resisted the request to re-clad the Chapel in its existing corrugated tin, opting instead for a rendered finish. It is considered that an acceptable conversion would seek to retain/repair the existing external cladding in order to preserve the intrinsic character and appearance of this prominent building and as such this proposal, which entails a new rendered finish would be contrary to Policy A60 of the Local Plan since it involves an alteration not in keeping with the form of the existing Chapel.
- 6.4 In the light of this failure to preserve the external appearance of the building it is not considered that there is any special justification to support the proposed extension to the Chapel. It is advised that the potential for providing an appropriately designed and modest extension was offered some support on the proviso that a high quality conversion of the historic building was achieved.

6.5 This is not the case for the reasons set out above and as such it is not considered that there are sufficient material considerations to warrant overriding the normal presumption against extending converted buildings and accordingly the proposal again fails the tests of Policy A60 and the Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance since the re-use of the Chapel is reliant on extensive alterations.

6.6 It is unfortunate that the applicant is not willing to compromise on the external cladding of the Chapel since the result in this case is a recommendation for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reason:

- 1. The proposed conversion would result in the re-cladding of the former Chapel building and furthermore requires an extension in order to facilitate the re-use of the building for residential purposes. The combination of these extensive alterations would result in detrimental harm to the intrinsic character and appearance of this prominently sited and locally important building. In this absence of any exceptional circumstance to justify these inappropriate alterations and additions, the proposal would be contrary to Policy H20 of the Hereford and Worcester County Structure Plan, Policies A2(D) and A60 of the Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire), the Councils Supplementary Guidance - The Re-Use and Adaptation of Traditional Rural Buildings and the guiding principles set out in PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.