

Supporting Statement

**Proposed change of use/conversion of a former Methodist Chapel to form 1 no
dwelling.**

Former Methodist Chapel, Lowgate Road, Conisholme.

Document reference- LDC3964STA

Prepared By:

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- 1 This statement has been prepared to accompany a full planning submission for the proposed change of use/conversion of a former Methodist Chapel in Conisholme.
- 2 The application site is located in the village of Conisholme at the junction of Lowgate Road and the A1031. The site is approximately 0.05 hectares and the grid reference is TF 53012 76283 (See Figure 1).

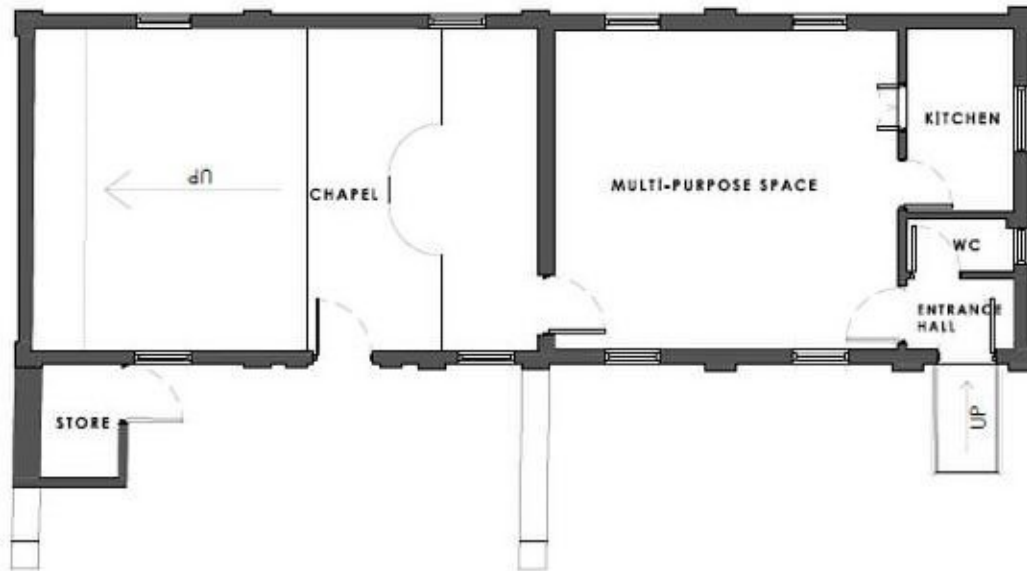


Figure 1- Aerial photograph showing the location of the site (site shown by red dot)

- 3 The site currently comprises a former Methodist Chapel and associated areas of grass and hard standing. The former chapel has a traditional linear form with a central apex ridge, hipped roof and detailing to the principal elevations with buttresses, corbelling and arched window heads. The chapel has a more recent extension to the south elevation
- 4 Internally the chapel comprises the traditional service hall with sloping floor in the original part of the building which can be accessed directly from the outside. A multi-purpose space with a small kitchen and W.C. is located in the newer part of the chapel. Externally the building is currently accessed through the newer part of the building which a concrete ramp. An area of hardstanding used for parking is located with the south and an area of grass to the south east.



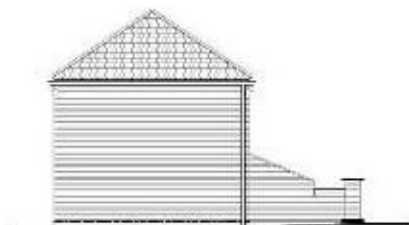
Figure 2 Photograph of existing chapel taken from Lowgate Road



BACK / EASTERN ELEVATION



SIDE / SOUTH-EASTERN ELEVATION



SIDE / NORTH-EASTERN ELEVATION



FRONT / WESTERN ELEVATION

Figure 3- Existing plans and elevations

- 5 The proposal involves the conversion of the chapel to form 1no dwelling. The floor level of the building will be raised by 1m to provide appropriate flood risk mitigation. The newer portion of the building will provide an open plan kitchen, living and dining area with doors opening south across an external deck area. A first floor will be inserted into the older hall building to provide 2no bedrooms at ground floor and a lounge and utility at ground floor. Externally, parking will be created on the existing area of hard standing to the front of the chapel with the area of grass turned onto domestic garden. The external elevations will have minimal alterations.



Figure 4- Proposed floor plans

- 6 The former chapel is located in the settlement of Conisholme which is defined as a small village by policy SP1 of the local plan. As the site involves the conversion of a building to form a dwelling there are two policies that are relevant in the local plan. The first being policy SP4 which supports where conversions such as this in small villages subject to certain criteria being met. Also, of relevant is policy SP18 which refers to housing in the Coastal Zone which again supports conversions like this with similar criteria to SP4 but requires the sites to be on settlement classed as medium villages and above, this slight difference in policy be addressed later. The criteria of Policy SP4 requires that;
- *It must be demonstrated that the site has been actively marketed for either a community, economic or leisure use at an appropriate price for a period of 12 months; and*
 - *Only that part of the site considered as brownfield should be reused or redeveloped and should not include areas of open countryside or adjacent open space.*
 - *Consideration should first be given to the conversion of any buildings on site where they do or could enhance the character of the area. If demolition is to be supported it would need to be clearly demonstrated that the existing building does not contribute to the character of the area, that the building was unsafe or that it was not structurally possible to convert.*

This is very similar to the wording of Policy SP18 which requires;

- *The site is a brownfield site*
 - *The site has become disused, empty and/or the buildings on it have become damaged and are causing unacceptable harm.*
 - *It must be demonstrated that the site has been actively marketed for either a community, economic or leisure use at an appropriate price for a period of 12 months; and*
 - *It must be demonstrated that the site is not viable for development for either a community, economic or leisure use.*
- 7 In relation to these criteria the building is no longer used by the Methodist Church as in the summer of 2021 The National Methodist Church ruled that churches must have a minimum of 12 members to be able to continue as independent

- congregations therefore it was decided that services would be held in Grainthorpe. A letter from the East Lincolnshire Methodist Church which explains and justifies the reason for the closure of the chapel can be found in Appendix A. Given that the building is no longer used for services and won't be used for services in the future the building is clearly now unused and can be classed as being brownfield. The proposals will utilise the existing building through conversion and will only reuse the area of site classed as being brownfield. It is therefore submitted that the proposals meet the direction of both SP4 and SP18. Turning now to the requirement of both of the policies for 12 month marketing to establish whether a community, economic or leisure use is viable. The East Lincolnshire Methodist Church is subject to the requirement of the Charity Commission to make the best use of the resources that have been entrusted to them, it is clear that the most financially beneficial return would be the sale of the building with planning permission for conversion to a dwelling. The Methodist Church is also concerned that the building as it is unused will deteriorate over the 12 month marketing process which would lead to additional costs which could be used on other projects. A very similar application at Alvingham Methodist Church which was also owned by the East Lincolnshire Methodist Church was approved in 2021 under reference N/004/01657/21 (decision notice can be found in Appendix B). In this instance the officer did not require the 12 months marketing process as similar justification was provided by the East Lincolnshire Methodist Church, the same logic should therefore be applied in this case.
- 8 In relation to the slight variation in SP4 and SP18 between the site being in small village or a medium village weight should be given to the sustainability benefits the proposals provide through the reuse and conversion of a local heritage asset. The reuse of the building for an appropriate residential use will guarantee its future and will restrict the need for green field land to be utilised for new build dwellings. The re-use of buildings is encouraged by the NPPF and although the site is located in small village and contrary to SP18 the sustainability benefits tip the planning balance in favour of the proposals.
- 9 In conclusion, the proposals will provide a high quality dwelling and will provide a new use for a local heritage asset. The proposals accord with local and national policy and should be granted planning permission.

APPENDIX A-
LETTER FROM EAST LINCOLNSHIRE METHODIST
CHURCH

APPENDIX B-
DECISION NOTICE N/004/01657/21

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

Agent/Applicant's Name & Address	Applicant's Name & Address
Mr. G. Kemp, Lincs Design Consultancy Ltd, 12 Vickers Lane, LOUTH, Lincolnshire. LN11 9PJ	Ms. C. Rolph, C/O Lincs Design Consultancy Ltd, 12 Vickers Lane, LOUTH, Lincolnshire. LN11 9PJ

Part I - Particulars of Application

Date received	Application Number
16/08/2021	N/004/01657/21

Particulars and location of the development

PROPOSAL: Planning Permission - Change of use, conversion of, alterations to former Methodist church to provide a dwelling.

LOCATION: ALVINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH, HIGHBRIDGE ROAD, ALVINGHAM, LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE, LN11 0QB

Part II - Particulars of decision

In pursuance of its powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the East Lindsey District Council grants permission for the carrying out of the development referred to in Part I hereof in accordance with the application and plans submitted subject to the following condition(s):

1. The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of four years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: To take account of the present restrictions on implementing permissions, in order to assist the recovery and in order to comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall only be undertaken in accordance with the following approved plans;

Dwg No. LDC3647-PL-01 Received by the LPA on 30/07/2021.
Dwg No. LDC3647-PL-02C Received by the LPA on 22/09/2021.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and the interests of proper planning.

3. Notwithstanding the details submitted, the bottom sash of the 4 no.

windows on the northern elevation to the rear of the entrance lobby, shall be non-opening and obscure glazed. The windows shall be implemented in that manner prior to first occupation of the building as a dwelling house and thereafter retained.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the neighbouring property. This condition is imposed in accordance with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. Notwithstanding the details submitted, the village war memorial plaque which is fixed on the south west elevation of the building shall remain in situ and not be removed.

Reason: In the interests of the historic integrity of the site. This condition is imposed in accordance with Policy SP11 of the Local Plan and para 198 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, (or any Order or Statutory Instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order), unless otherwise shown on the approved plans, none of the following developments or alterations shall be carried out:

- i) the erection of house extensions including dormer windows, conservatories, garages, car ports, porches or pergolas;
- ii) alterations including the installation additional windows or doors, or the installation of roof windows;

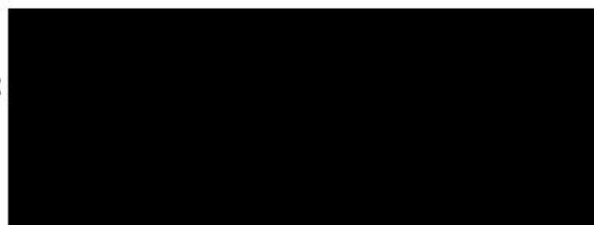
Reason: To ensure the Local Planning Authority retains control over the future development of the site in the interests of its architectural and visual amenity and the visual amenity of the local area. This condition is imposed in accordance with SP10 of the East Lindsey Local Plan.

POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT:-

This planning application was acceptable, as submitted, and complies with the Development Plan Policies, and the National Planning Policy Framework. As such no negotiations were necessary in this case.

Dated: 11/10/2021

Signed:



Mike Gildersleeves
Assistant Director - Planning

Tel. No. 01507 601111

EAST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL, TEDDER HALL, MANBY PARK, LOUTH, Lincs, LN11 8UP.

Conisholme Methodist Church

The United Methodist Free Church built the current chapel in 1856 to seat 90. At that time Conisholme already had a Wesleyan Chapel, constructed in 1837. This latter building was closed in 1904 so that the village only had one non-conformist chapel. It was used as a Village Hall before being converted to a house in 2000.

The one remaining Methodist church in Conisholme flourished for much of the 20th Century. In particular, it had a thriving Sunday School, originally housed in a separate building. Church members raised funds in the 1990s to build on a schoolroom/hall which has been well used.

In the 21st Century, membership at Conisholme Chapel has dwindled dramatically as families have grown up, moved away, and not been replaced. Traditional occupations such as farming have seen a decline, and there has been a migration from isolated coastal settlements such as Conisholme towards larger centres of population. Membership has dwindled from 13 to 8 over the last 5 years, with an associated decline in giving leading to financial difficulties.

In the summer of 2021, the National Methodist Church (the Connexion) laid down a ruling to say that churches must have a minimum of 12 members to be able to continue as independent congregations. This ruling affected Conisholme and the neighbouring church of Grainthorpe. Various congregational meetings were held over the summer of 2021 to decide on a way forward, and it was agreed that the churches would join forces, with services to be based at Grainthorpe. Conisholme did not have sufficient funds, or active members, to sustain the building so Methodist Church trustees reluctantly made the formal decision to close in October 2021.

The decision to close a church has to be ratified by the Connexion and a consultation process carried out. This takes into account the size of population affected (87) and the ease with which members could worship elsewhere – the nearest chapel to Conisholme is only 2.8 miles away at Grainthorpe. Once closure was accepted, responsibility for Conisholme passed from the church trustees to the Circuit and a decision had to be made about the building.

Any decision to sell has to be ratified by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) who ask us to consider these factors:

Property plays a significant role in enabling a presence within communities. A Methodist building that is welcoming, eye-catching and that acts as a focal point for community engagement can speak powerfully of God's love. Utilising a property either by redeveloping it for social purpose or incorporating a range of social uses into an existing building is as much a part of a mission plan as preaching, worship or community evangelism. In 2018, the Methodist Council approved a two year Connexional property strategy to encourage Trustees to see and realise these possibilities.

The Circuit trustees therefore discussed alternative uses for Conisholme Chapel. An obvious solution would be for a community building, but Conisholme and Grainthorpe already share a Village Hall, and there is insufficient demand to warrant another such building. The idea of creating a ministers' retreat centre was discussed. However, there are already 2 such retreat centres in the area – at Scamblesby (which is struggling to remain viable) and Lea and so another such facility would be surplus to requirement.

The decision was made that selling would be the best option, as this would raise funds that would support other chapels in the area such as Marshchapel – which is undertaking significant community work - and Saltfleet, which is in need of urgent repairs in order to continue its important contribution to local life. We are seeking planning permission as we feel that if we were to place the chapel 'as seen' on the open market, any buyers would seek planning permission for conversion to residential use – a precedent already set with the former Wesleyan Chapel. By getting planning permission ourselves, this should allow us to realise a greater return on the investment of our Methodist forebears which we can use to continue their work in other communities. It is also a requirement of the Charity Commission that we make the best use of the resources that have been entrusted to us, and we hope you will look favourably on this application.