
The Old Church, Mockbeggar Lane, Ibsley, Ringwood

Planning and Design Statement

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1. Introduction and Proposals

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared to support the listed building application and planning application at the Former St Martins, Old Church, Mockbeggar Lane for the following development:

The change of use of the building to a residential dwelling. The proposal includes the installation of partition wall, doors and structural supports within the building, alterations to the internal layout and features, including installation of a wood burner, new plumbing, servicing and fire suppression system. Externally a flue would be installed for the wood burner.

- 1.2 The primary purpose of the proposed works are to obtain optimum viable use for the now vacant building. Residential occupation of the building would provide a much needed new home within the district and help secure the long-term maintenance of the Grade II listed former church.

- 1.3 This application is further supported by the following documents:

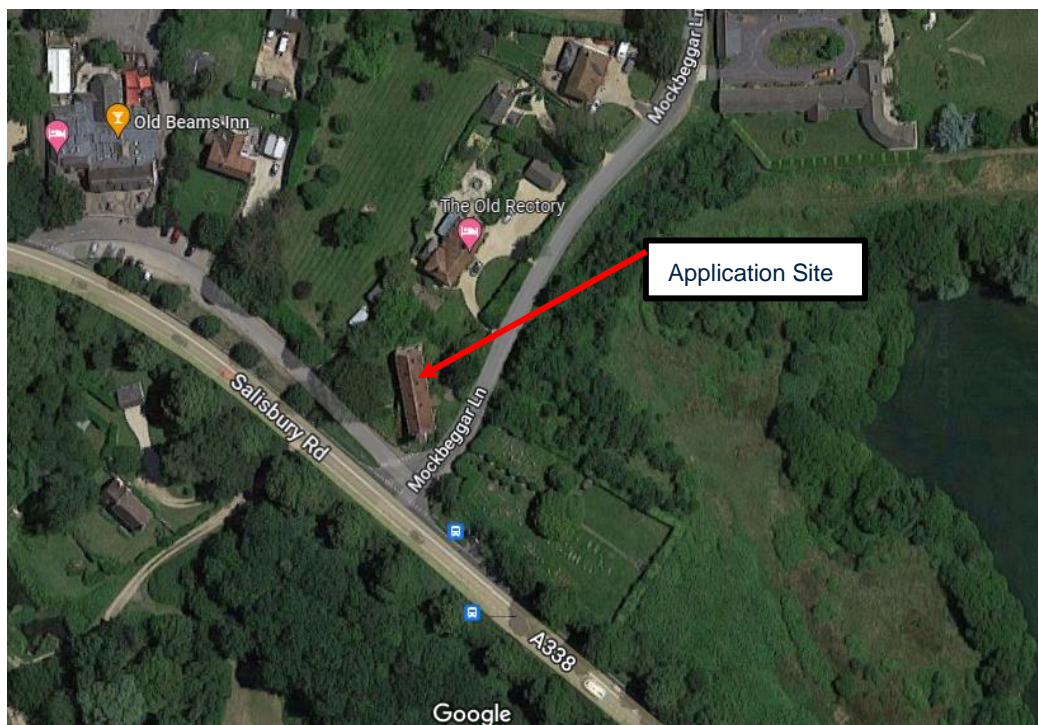
- Existing and Proposed Drawings
- Site Photos
- Structural Information by Baker Chatterton Structural Design
- Heritage Statement prepared by Savills Heritage
- Optimum Viable Use Report by Savills

- 1.4 This statement has been prepared following an examination of the site and surroundings, research into the relevant planning history of the site and an examination of the adopted policy documents, and is set out under the following sections:

- **Section 2** outlines the site and its context within the surrounding area;
- **Section 3** provides an overview of the planning history;
- **Section 4** outlines the relevant planning policy framework;
- **Section 5** appraises the main considerations;
- **Section 6** draws our conclusions in respect of the proposals.

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located to the north of Mockbeggar Lane, a country road on the junction with Mockbeggar Lane and Salisbury Road, leading to sporadic development on the west extent becoming more dense traveling east, all largely on the northern side of the road. The south of Mockbeggar Lane is open countryside with a number of manmade lakes.
- 2.2 The western end of the road, closest to Salisbury Road features many dwellings of low profile being farm buildings or bungalows in substantial plots, with outbuildings located along the road frontage. There is also denser development as a result of more recent infill housing.
- 2.3 The site comprises a former church situated on the corner of Mockbeggar Lane and the service access to The Old Beams public house that is located alongside the A338 Salisbury Road.
- 2.4 The former church is a Grade II listed building.



3. Relevant Planning History

3.1 The recorded planning history reveals a number of consented changes, as follows:

- 67967 – LB consent – internal alterations and roof lights. Granted 21/01/2000
- 75840 – Loft conversion to form residential accommodation. Refused 19/11/2002
- 76523 – LB consent – internal alterations and rooflights. Refused 20/11/2002
- 78952 – LB consent – new stud partitions and windows. Refused 26/09/2003
- 78956– Loft conversion to form residential unit. Refused 25/09/2003
- 79704 – LB consent-rebuild chimneys, replace doors, windows, ceilings and floors. Granted 01/12/2003
- 85837 – Use as a dwelling. Refused 25/10/2005
- 89315 – LB consent – install partition to balcony and first floor partitions. Withdrawn 2007
- 89319 – Use of part of building as living accommodation and gallery. Withdrawn 2007
- 14/10585 – Use as a residential dwelling. Granted 14/07/2014
- 14/10586 - Use as a residential dwelling, internal alterations (Listed Building Consent). Granted 04/06/2014
- 20/10934 – Certificate of lawfulness of existing use. (lawful use of the building as a dwellinghouse). Refused 10.11.22
- 21/10587 – Certificate of lawfulness of existing use. (use of the land and building for residential purposes ancillary to the use of the land as an art gallery). Granted 22.09.22
- 22/11447 - Change of use of the building to a residential dwelling; installation of partition walls and doors within the building; alterations to the internal layout and features including installation of a wood burner, new plumbing, servicing and fire suppression system; External flue for the wood burner; air conditioning units installed. Withdrawn March 2023.

Pre-Application

3.2 Following the withdrawal of application 22/11447, the applicant has done pre-application with the council so that the proposals could be discussed and outstanding issues resolved.

3.3 The following summarised comments were made by the council within their pre-app written advice letter:

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Change of Use

- 3.4 New residential development is not usually permitted within the countryside unless it meets certain exceptions. The building does however benefit from an element of residential use and permission has previously been granted for a change of use to residential. Further details concerning optimal viable use required within a forthcoming application.

Design and Heritage

- 3.5 The approach taken, which leaves the nave as a single double height space protects the interest of the historic arrangement of the space as a place of worship and allows the historic setting of the monuments to be retained. Whilst there would be some alteration to the 19th century roof space this change is considered vastly less harmful than subdivision of the nave.
- 3.6 Roof truss - concern that the proposal will leave none of the historic trusses intact.
- 3.7 Kitchen - the kitchen spills out beyond the current vestry area and the intensification of domestic details within the nave area could not be justified unless solely residential use can be demonstrated as the optimal viable use.
- 3.8 Organ – whilst it is understood there is another church that the organ may be moved to, there is no assessment of its contribution to the significance of the building within the submitted details.
- 3.9 Services – need to ensure these elements are visually discreet and sensitive in location.

Impacts to Neighbour Amenity

- 3.10 In view of the orientation of the building in relation to the adjoining residential property, I do not consider that the proposal would adversely affect the residential amenities of the neighbouring property.

Highways, Access and Parking

- 3.11 The Parking Standards SPD recommends that such development should accommodate 2.5 parking spaces. However, in order to maintain the setting of the listed building and reduce the need to increase hard surfacing or widen existing access points, the retention of the single parking space may be considered acceptable in this instance particularly as the existing lawful gallery use did not provide any on site parking.

Trees/vegetation/landscaping

- 3.12 The retention of all trees within the site area which is welcomed, particularly as two (to the north side) have tree preservation orders on them. Your landscaping submission does not include any works to the grounds although the headstone proposals suggest that there is a scheme to relocate several stones to the boundary. This detail should be indicated on the proposed landscaping together with existing/proposed surface changes.

Applicant Response

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- 3.13 The applicant has thoroughly assessed the suitability of the site for a range of alternative uses, and an Optimum Viable Use Report was produced. This report firstly details the marketing strategy completed for the sale of the property. It shows that despite two marketing campaigns being done, there was no interest in the property for any use outside of residential. An offer was also received with the intention of demolishing the Church and erecting a block of seven flats.
- 3.14 Potential alternative uses have been reviewed and explored for the property. These include:
- Church or Other Religious Facility
 - Retail
 - Office
 - Food and Beverage
 - Community Hall
 - Creche or Nursery
- 3.15 As explained in the Report, these uses are not viable due to reasons of lack of demand, over supply in the immediate area and unsuitability of the Church and its surrounding land to successfully accommodate these uses.
- 3.16 A residential use is the only economically viable use for the Property. New housing is of course in significant need both within the New Forest District and Nationally. The data for the area suggests that the residential market within Ibsley is primarily driven by demand for family homes. The proposed 3 bedroom home would cater for local need.
- 3.17 The Supporting Heritage Statement details that the timber king post trussed roof would be retained in part, ensuring the ability to understand the historic form of the roof space, and retaining the majority of the fabric of the trussed roof. A kitchen at the eastern end of the nave will hug the existing wall, with cabinets and services at ground level only, making a minimal visual impact of modest appearance and scale. The organ is not contemporary with the re-construction of the building in the 1830s, and in being reused in another church where it will continue to be used in ecclesiastical services or ceremonies, it therefore can continue to hold an integral part in the religious and communal aspects of another community.
- 3.18 The Heritage Statement concludes that a small degree of harm to the significance of the former church may result (due to the alterations to the internal form of the loft space, and the increase in domestic character in the former nave) however this harm could only be understood as limited, and of 'less than substantial harm' in NPPF terms. This less than substantial harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, which includes securing its optimum viable use, as set out at paragraph 202 of the NPPF.

4. Planning Policy Framework

4.1 This section outlines the relevant national and local planning policies against which the proposals are considered.

Policy Framework

4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications and appeals are determined in accordance with the development plan for an area, unless any material considerations indicate otherwise. This legal requirement is reiterated in the introduction to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Adopted 'Development Plan'

4.3 The adopted 'development plan' comprises the following:

- Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning strategy
- Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management
- Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF maintains the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11) which is defined in paragraph 8 as incorporating the economic, social and environmental elements.

Housing

4.5 Paragraph 119 specifically promotes the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

4.6 Paragraph 120 D promotes and supports the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where supply is constrained and available sites could be used more efficiently.

Heritage

- 4.7 The NPPF covers proposals which affect heritage assets – at paragraph 197 the document lists the relevant considerations, which include the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 195 states that the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset should be assessed, and the more important an asset, the greater the weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.
- 4.8 Any harm should be justified clearly and convincingly. These paragraphs are to be applied in conjunction with the statutory tests under s66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which states that special regard needs to be paid to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest, and S72 of the same Act that states that special attention should be paid to preserving or enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.

5. Considerations

5.1 The main considerations include:

1. Change of use;
2. Heritage considerations;
3. Amenity Impact on Neighbours;
4. Transport and Highways;
5. Trees, biodiversity and ecosystems.

Change of use

5.2 Policy ECON2 of the Local Plan 2016 seeks the retention of employment sites. Where non-employment uses are proposed, the policy asks that it is demonstrated that the employment site is no longer suitable or viable for continued employment use. Factors requiring consideration include if the condition of the site or building renders it unsuitable for its present or any other realistic and appropriate employment use, alternatively marketing evidence to show a lack of demand.

5.3 Saved policy DM1 is also applicable, it seeks to conserve heritage assets. The policy states that where appropriate and necessary to secure the long term future of a heritage asset, in particular where it is in a poor condition or at risk, an exception may be made to other local plan policies. In the case of this application, the heritage asset would include the Grade II listed former church.

5.4 In addition to current policy, the site's previous planning history is also of relevance. In 2014 planning permission and listed building consent (ref:14/10585 and 14/10596) were granted by the Council to convert the church (then in office and gallery use) into a residential dwelling. The site's current circumstances and context are still very similar to when these previous consents and approvals were granted. Noting the following:

- There is been no subsequent planning applications sought to change the use of the building.
- The recently submitted lawful development certificate establishes that the building has sat empty since 2017 when the last commercial use of the building left.
- The objectives of Council policy which seek to retain employment uses (in most circumstances) are broadly the same as those applicable in 2014, with a similar policy criteria for assessing development

still applying.

- 5.5 In justifying the loss of employment in the 2014 applications, the Officer Report states the following (refer paragraph 14.10:

“The proposed development would result in the loss of an employment use given that planning consent was originally granted to use the building as an office for an architect. Local plan policies seek to retain employment uses and accordingly, the proposal would not accord with its aims. However, the building was only used by a single architect for several years and the actual loss of employment would be minimal. Moreover, if the building was to be used as an office by a company seeking to maximise the space of the building, this could accommodate in excess of 10 people and the intensity and level of activity would put pressure on the limited car parking provision in the area.”

- 5.6 In paragraph 14.6, the Officer Report refers to policy objectives of conserving heritage assets and states:

“where appropriate and necessary to secure the long term future of a heritage asset, in particular where it is in a poor condition or at risk, an exception may be made to other local plan policies. In this case, whilst the proposed use would secure the long term retention of the building and provide some much needed investment to resolve the general repair and maintenance work to the building (such as damp)”...

- 5.7 If we were to now consider the present circumstances, it becomes clear that the change of use of the building to residential should remain acceptable. The architect’s practice formerly occupying the site is now long gone, and gallery use of the building ceased in 2017. The building has since remained empty and offers nothing in terms of employment value or any commercial benefit to the surrounding area. The proposal to change the use of the building will result in the creation of a modest dwelling that contributes to the viability of local services as well as making an economically beneficial use of a building that is no longer viable for the purpose it was originally intended for, or indeed as an office of gallery.

Optimum Viable Use

- 5.8 The applicant has thoroughly assessed the suitability of the site for a range of alternative uses, and an Optimum Viable Use Report has been produced. This report firstly details the marketing strategy completed for the sale of the property. It shows that despite two marketing campaigns being done, there was no interest in the property for any use outside of residential with an offer received with the intention of

demolishing the Church and erecting a block of seven flats.

5.9 Potential alternative uses have been reviewed and explored for the property. These include:

- Church or Other Religious Facility
- Retail
- Office
- Food and Beverage
- Community Hall
- Creche or Nursery

5.10 As explained in the Report these uses are not viable due to reasons of lack of demand, over supply in the immediate area and unsuitability of the Church and its surrounding land to successfully accommodate these uses.

5.11 The conversion to a residential use will therefore ensure the future of the listed building is safeguarded and provides a beneficial use to a building that will otherwise remain unoccupied.

New Dwelling

5.12 Consistent with NPPF Paragraphs 119 and 120, The proposals seek to make effective use of land in meeting the need for homes. Policy STR5 of the Council Plan establishes that the District needs to provide 10,420 homes over the Plan period.

5.13 NPPF Paragraph 80. States the following:

“Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;

b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;

c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting

d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or

e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it: - is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and - would

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significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

- 5.14 Policy 80 is however not applicable as the development not meet the meaning of an isolated home, this position is well accepted within numerous planning law decisions, given that in the case of the proposal site it is located within the settlement of Ibsley, next to other houses and connected well to public transport with a bus station next door.
- 5.15 Even if paragraph 80 was applicable, the proposed dwelling is the optimal viable use of the heritage asset and re-uses a disused building, meeting part b and c of paragraph 80. This position is confirmed by the supporting Optimal Viable Use Report.
- 5.16 In order to accommodate identified housing need, Policy STR4 sets out the District’s settlement hierarchy. This hierarchy identifies three tiers of settlements and sets out the nature and scale of development that would be appropriate for each type of settlement.
- 5.17 The applicant site is located within Ibsley, which is a designated ‘small rural village’. This location is stated under the Plan to be a suitable location for small-scale uses appropriate in a countryside setting and that help to maintain community life, including proportionate and small-scale housing development where it is specifically to meet local housing needs identified by the local community.
- 5.18 The applicant proposes to convert the former church, a current E class unit, into a dwelling. The District in general has a large range of housing needs. This fact is echoed within Policy HOU1 whose objective for residential development is to address the diversity of housing needs of local people at all stages of life by providing a mix and choice of homes by type, size, tenure and cost. It goes on to state, larger homes continue to form part of future new home supply, but the existing housing stock of the Plan Area is predominantly 3 and 4 bedroom homes, and turnover within the existing stock will continue to be the main source of supply for meeting future demand for larger homes.
- 5.19 The proposed 3 bedroom home would be a housing type that meets the general housing needs of this area, and is an appropriate form of housing.
- 5.20 In terms of central government guidance, it is clear that there is a general steer towards the conversion of vacant and disused buildings into residential development. The National Planning Policy Framework is applicable and seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas, and housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, the development seeking to re-use a redundant and disused buildings would result in an enhancement to the immediate setting.
- 5.21 Given the above, the applicant’s position is that the conversion of the building into a dwelling is supported in principle under both local and national policy. This is similar to the position taken previously by the Council

in 2014, for the same change of use.

Heritage Considerations

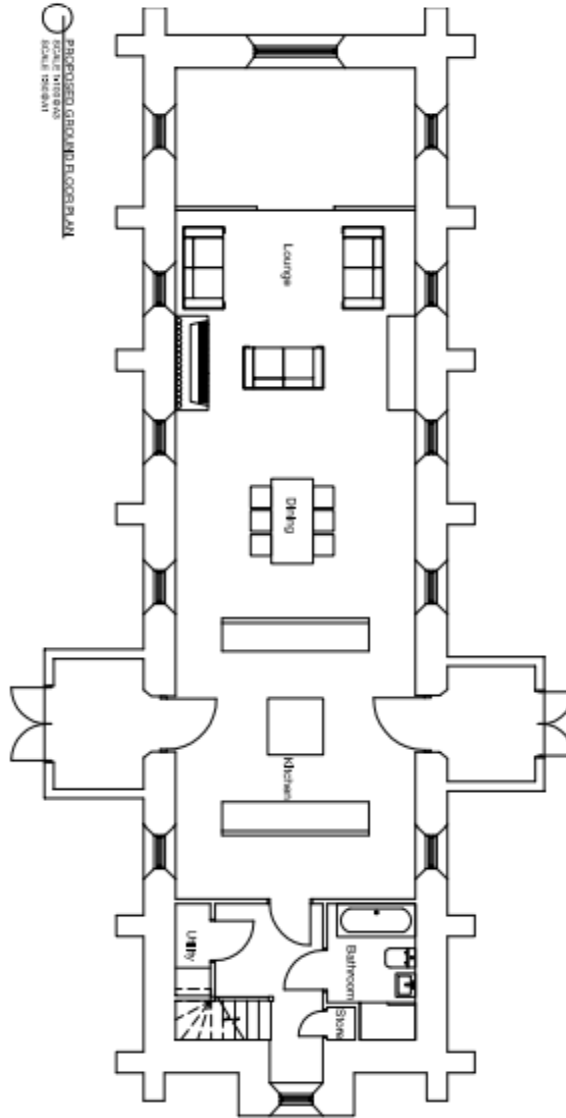
5.22 The building became grade II listed in 12 March 1987. The listing description reads as follows:

Parish church. 1832 by John Peniston surveyor, on site of old church. Brick with some blue headers, east wall partly reused dressed stone, plain tile roof. Plan of single cell chancel and nave with north and south porches and small west tower. To east end Y-tracery window in chamfered opening; corner buttresses. To each side of 6 bays, pointed lancet in chamfered opening, except to west, buttresses between bays and at each end except between west of centre bays which have gabled porch with pointed, chamfered opening. West end has small cross-section tower in centre with similar window, and offset belfry stage with west and east bell opening and gabled roof. Inside brass of 1599 on floor by altar, tablet to Mary Ann Gray 1757 in brick pavilion central aisle. On south wall monument 1627 to John Constable of 2 large kneeling figures between 2 columns to wide open pediment, both hold vine with busts of their children. C18 Perpendicular style font. On north wall tablet 1757 to Cray. At east end prayer boards, above west door Royal arms board. Gallery at west end of timber with later screen under to form vestry.

5.23 The 2014 permissions (ref: 14/10585 and 14/10586) entailed the conversion of the former church, with works including the installation of stud walls and door at ground level. In assessing the application (refer Officer Report) the conservation officer raised no objections in converting the building to a residential property in terms of the effect on character, fabric and integrity of the listed building. In addition, both the fabric of the building and its contents were found to be complete and thus no revisions of the listing were needed. The design of the proposed domestic adaptations was found to be acceptable.

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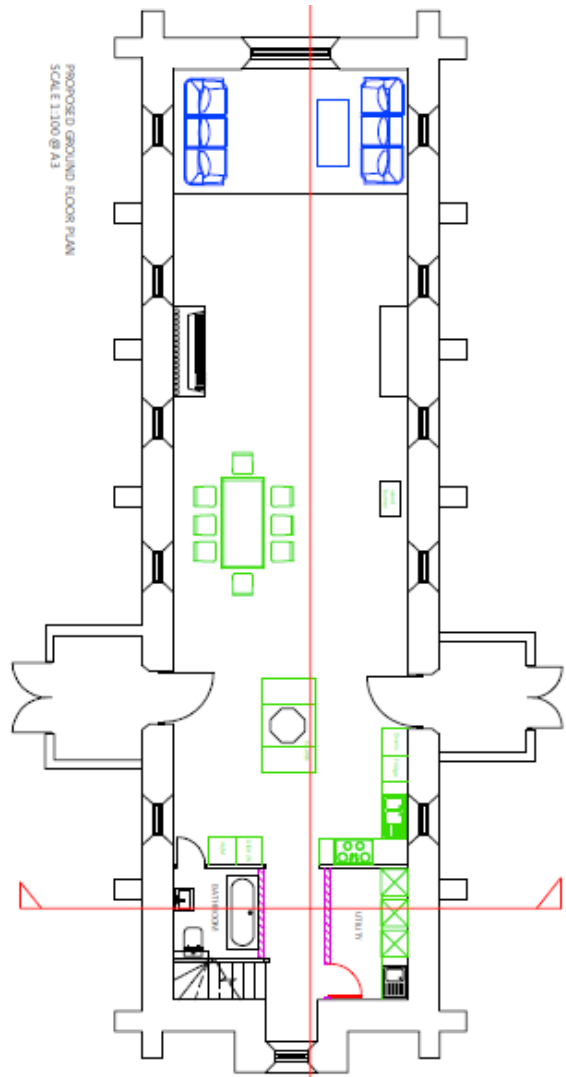
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Previously consented ground floor layout

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Proposed ground floor layout

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- 5.24 The supporting Heritage Statement to be read alongside this planning statement provides an overall understanding of where the significance of the Grade II listed former St Martin's Church lies. The proposals for development have been revised in response to this assessment and in response to feedback received from both the LPA's Planning Officer and Conservation Officer. The proposals illustrate the aim to retain and celebrate elements which showcase the historic use of the building, the earlier building, and echoes of its use as a church despite its conversion.
- 5.25 The Heritage Statement acknowledges that the conversion of the building to residential use would see a change to how the building will be occupied, and would require internal alterations which would alter the interior form of the space (notably at loft level). These alterations have been minimised where possible whilst also allowing the ongoing viable use of the building.
- 5.26 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) defines 'optimum viable use' and includes the guidance that 'harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised'. A small degree of harm to the significance of the former church may result (due to the alterations to the internal form of the loft space, and the increase in domestic character in the former nave) however this harm could only be understood as limited, and of 'less than substantial harm' in NPPF terms. If considered thus, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, which includes securing its optimum viable use, as set out at paragraph 202 of the NPPF.
- 5.27 In terms of external changes to the building, the applicant proposes to install a flue for the wood burner. This flue would be discreetly sited on the south-eastern part of the building, with minimal protrusion above the plane of the roof, and thus not visible from the A338 Road nor would it appear visually harmful.
- 5.28 In view of the above, the proposals are considered to comply with the NPPF and Local Plan policy DM1.

Amenity Impact to Neighbours

- 5.29 Policy ENV3 states that all development should achieve high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life and enhances the character and identity of the locality by creating buildings, streets, places and spaces. To achieve this objective, unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion or overbearing impact, overlooking, shading, noise and light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character or residential amenity should be avoided.

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- 5.30 The proposal would be a neighbourly development that would have no material impact on surrounding residential occupiers. The residential use of the building would provide a medium sized home, and at this low density the residential occupation would not lead to noise disturbances that adversely impact adjacent occupiers. The building is of course a former church where there would have been some noise generation from its use, whilst in comparison the residential use proposed has a low noise profile.
- 5.31 It should also be noted that the building is separated approximately 20m from the nearest neighbour, with further vegetation and trees between the sites, helping to further mitigate any impacts from the new use.
- 5.32 The proposal does not propose any new windows, and therefore there would be no new views created. Furthermore, the development retains the existing proportions of the church and as such there would be no resulting shading or loss of light.
- 5.33 Overall the proposal would safeguard neighbour amenity and complies with policy ENV3.

Transport and highways

- 5.34 Policy ENV3 requires development to integrate sufficient car and cycle parking spaces so that realistic needs are met in a manner that is not prejudicial to the character and quality of the street, highway safety, emergency or service access or to pedestrian convenience and comfort.
- 5.35 The site has an existing off street car park space to the north east corner of the site, off Salisbury Road that would be adequate for the dwelling. Additional parking if needed is available along the service road on the western side of the building. The use as a dwelling will therefore have limited impact on the safe use of the highway.
- 5.36 It should also be noted that the current authorised use of the building as a commercial office/ galley has the potential to create significantly more traffic and car and vehicle movements from employees and visitors compared to a 3 bedroom residential dwelling. This was identified by the Council planning officer in the 2014 planning application (refer Officer Report paragraph 14.10) "*.....Moreover, if the building was to be used as an office by a company seeking to maximise the space of the building, this could accommodate in excess of 10 people and the intensity and level of activity would put pressure on the limited car parking provision in the area.*"
- 5.37 The proposal would result in an improved situation from a traffic and highways perspective than if the building was retained in its current use, and should be considered acceptable. No objections towards parking were made by the Council during pre-application.

Trees, biodiversity and ecosystems

- 5.38 The proposals do not impact any trees within the site nor is there any landscaping proposed. As such the proposals would not have any impact on local biodiversity or ecosystems.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The application site is in a highly sustainable location on the A338 Salisbury Road and with the benefit of a frequent bus service to Salisbury and Ringwood. The Local Plan supports small-scale housing development in the settlement of Ibsley. The conversion of the former church into a residential dwelling would make an important contribution to the housing needs of the District as it provides a 3 bedroom home, which is the housing size identified by the Plan to be of greatest need.
- 6.2 The proposed change of use will represent no loss of employment land or premises in real terms, as the building's use was of a small scale and has been vacant since 2017. The Optimum Viable Use Report submitted has reviewed other alternative uses for the building and concludes that these are not viable. A conversion to residential use represents the optimal viable use of the property.
- 6.3 The building is Grade II listed, but if it continues to be left vacant, it would likely fall into a state of disrepair given the ongoing repairs and maintenance costs that are needed. The proposed conversion to a residential use will ensure the future of the listed building is safeguarded and provides a beneficial and optimal use to a building that will otherwise remain unoccupied. The Heritage Statement concludes that any harm to the building through conversion would be limited, and of 'less than substantial harm' in NPPF terms. This limited harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, which includes securing its optimum viable use, and creating a new home for the District in a sustainable location.
- 6.4 In totality, the proposal is a well-conceived response to the very particular and unusual circumstances of the site. It provides the opportunity to secure the longevity of the building whilst providing a home in a sustainable location in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF and Local Plan.

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