

CONSERVATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Application No: 23/00862/FUL

Case Officer: Sharron Williams

Heritage Assets: Grade II Listed Building (Setting); Conservation Area; Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA)

Address: Flat Above 6 Church Green West Redditch Worcestershire

Proposal: Construction of new first and second floor rear extension, conversion of existing offices and existing apartment into 4 new apartments comprising 2 no 1 bedroom units and 2 no. 2 bedroom units

Overview and Heritage Assets

The Heritage Assets affected as a result of this application are the Church Green Conservation Area, 6 Church Green West (A Non-Designated Heritage Asset NDHA), and the Grade II Listed church as the application site is within its setting.

6 Church Green West is one of the buildings surrounding the core of the Conservation Area which is made up of the C19 St. Stephen's church and graveyard. The church is designed by H Woodyer with later additions by Temple Moore, it is in the Decorated style, built from sandstone with slate roofs. Its surroundings include 2nr. Grade II listed memorials, a Grade II listed fountain and a range of Grade II listed retail and commercial buildings running along Church Green East. The church's immediate setting is contained by the built form around the green, but it extends along the arterial routes from the centre, where views are available. William Street is one such route, from which no.6 and no.7a Church Green West frame a significant view of the church's tower and west gable.

No.6 Church Green West appears on the 1st edition OS map as a post office and does not appear to have altered significantly in plan outline since that time. It forms a pair with no.5 and historic aerial photography shows the buildings in 1921, since which time the ground floor retail shopfronts have been modernised and the first-floor bay windows have been removed. Roof stacks have also been removed, although other roof features remain intact, such as ridge crest tiles, eaves dentils and two feature gables. Along William Street the scale of the building diminishes to a single storey flat-roofed structure. Fenestration along this façade includes timber sashes, 4 over 4 at second floor and 8 over 8 at first and ground floor, with an 8-panel timber door. Two windows are modified; one at ground floor being blocked/boarded up, and another at first floor enlarged. The building is considered to be a NDHA due to its age and original function, however the level of modification it has endured leaves it making only a neutral contribution to the Conservation Area and it has limited significance. However, it is considered to have group value along with buildings along Church Green West as collectively they contribute positively to the setting of the Grade II listed church and to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Proposals

The proposals are for the erection of a two storey roof extension to the rear of 6 Church Green West, and for the conversion of the existing apartment and office space into 4 new apartments.

Policy and Guidance

s. 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states: *"with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."*

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states: *"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."*

Policy BDP20.3 of the Bromsgrove District Plan states: *"Development affecting Heritage Assets, including alterations or additions as well as development within the setting of Heritage Assets, should not have a detrimental impact on the character, appearance or significance of the Heritage Asset or Heritage Assets."*

Policy BDP20.8 of the Bromsgrove District Plan states: *"Where a detailed Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan has been adopted, it will be a material consideration in determining applications for development within that Conservation Area."*

Policy BDP20.9 of the Bromsgrove District Plan states: *"Development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area."*

Policy BDP20.14 of the Bromsgrove District Plan states: *"In considering applications that directly or indirectly affect Heritage Assets, a balanced judgement will be applied having regard to the scale of any harm or loss as a result of proposed development and the significance of the Heritage Asset."*

Paragraph 4.3.1 of BDC's High Quality Design SPD states: *"New residential development within the setting of a designated heritage asset will need to pay special attention to the street scene and must preserve or enhance the character of the area."*

Paragraph 4.3.2 of BDC's High Quality Design SPD states: *"Where new residential developments are proposed within the setting of a designated heritage asset, great care will need to be had to ensure the setting of the heritage asset is sustained and enhanced. Appropriate siting and design of the new development will need to be considered, as well as materials, layout and appropriateness."*

Position

These comments are written in response to the rebuttal of previous Conservation Comments.

There has been much debate with regards to the historic gap to the rear of the application site, and the diminishing scale of buildings leading away from the church. Regardless of whether or not the historic gap is historically accurate, or the diminishing scale of buildings was an intentional design in the setting of the Grade II listed church, the proposals are still considered to cause harm to the CA, and would be a negative development in the setting of the listed building which would fail to preserve or enhance its significance.

Paragraph 4.1 in the Church green Conservation Area Appraisal states that *"The CA is focused around the Church of St Stephen and the surrounding amenity space."* And in section 4.4 c) of the Conservation Area appraisal, the view from *"William street where the west elevation of the church is framed by street frontages"* is identified as a viewing point of interest. This shows that the site has higher sensitivity. It is a building that frames an important view towards the listed church, and it is a building, by way of its position, prominence, and appearance, contributes strongly to the character of the conservation area.

Church Green Conservation Area

Policy BDP20.9 of the Bromsgrove District Plan states: "Development within or adjacent to a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area."

The Conservation Area Appraisal states that: "William Street has largely been redeveloped and pedestrianised. With the exception of the buildings at the east end, which form the return to buildings on Church Green West, there is little of interest and street value" – it is therefore important to retain and emphasise the existing architecture of 6 Church Green West and of the buildings at the west end of the street as they are part of the character of the Conservation Area. The proposals to add a two-storey extension, making the building 3 storeys, and returning it at the rear elevation to the line of the neighbouring property, would result in a bulk that is uncharacteristic of the Conservation Area and would be another negative alteration to the NDHA which has already suffered many negative changes.

When viewing the rear of the buildings from William Street, there is an organic and undulating roof line which clearly shows the historic street pattern and buildings contributing to the Conservation Area. The two-storey extension would be a bulky addition to the roof line, and would impose upon the neighbouring properties in the near vicinity, detracting from the significance of the CA, and eroding its historic patterns. It is acknowledged that there are some modern extensions to the rear around the car park, but these are not positive additions and should not be used as an example of good development.

Setting of the Listed Building

There is currently a character on William Street of buildings which step down in height from Church Green West along William Street. This may or may not have been the historic character, but it is the current character, and that character contributes to the enhancement of views towards St Stephens church. It is argued that an infilling of space here, or an increase of height above the single storey element would "resolve" the west end of the property. However this has not been proved as the current design, by way of its scale and massing, would fail to do this and would instead be a negative alteration in the setting of the Listed Building.

Conclusion

The ground floor extension is C20 and not architecturally appealing, therefore it contributes little to the significance of the NDHA, CA, or setting of the Listed Building. The principal of building on top of this section therefore is not objected to. However, the design of the extension should be addressed. Whilst the diminishing scale of buildings might not be an historic factor, it is a factor that aids appreciation of the Listed Building and allows the historic form of the original part of the NDHA to be read. Therefore, the opinion is shared with the previous conservation officer that a diminished scale of extension in this area would benefit the preservation and enhancement of the views towards the church, therefore preserving and enhancing the significance of the church itself, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and the significance of the NDHA.

In light of the above assessment, the proposals do not accord with: s. 16(2) or 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; the NPPF; Local Plan policies; or the High Quality Design SPD. For these reasons our current recommendation would be to refuse the application.

Date: 13/11/2023

Signed: Jessica Stileman *Conservation Officer*