
Case Number	22/04490/FUL (Formerly PP-11692509)
Application Type	Full Planning Application
Proposal	Alterations to former church including provision of mezzanine floor and ramp to front to form 8 apartments with parking provision and a new vehicular access through the south western boundary wall (Amended Plans/Description)
Location	Woodhouse Trinity Methodist Church Chapel Street Woodhouse Sheffield S13 7JL
Date Received	14/12/2022
Team	South
Applicant/Agent	PPIY Limited
Recommendation	Refuse

Refuse for the following reason(s):

- 1 The Local Planning Authority consider that the proposed development, involving the near total removal of the interior and excessive degree of subdivision would detract from the special architectural and historic interest of the Woodhouse Trinity Methodist Church, a Grade II Listed Building, and insufficient information has been provided to justify this level of harm. In this respect the proposal is contrary to the requirements of policy BE19 of the Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The Local Planning Authority consider that the proposed development, involving the hard surfacing of the land next to the church for car parking and ancillary buildings, would harm the setting of the Woodhouse Trinity Methodist Church, a Grade II Listed Building, and insufficient information has been provided to justify this level of harm. In this respect the proposal is contrary to the requirements of policy BE19 of the Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3 The Local Planning Authority consider that the proposed development could have a harmful affect on buried archaeology in the parcel of land to the west

of Trinity Methodist Church, and insufficient information has been provided to assess the likelihood or magnitude of this harm. In this respect the proposal is contrary to policy BE22 of the Unitary Development Plan, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

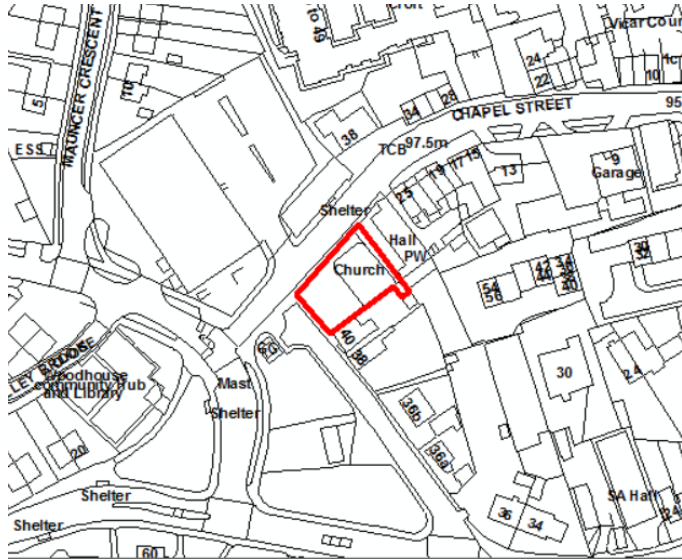
Attention is Drawn to the Following Directives:

1. Despite the Local Planning Authority trying to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner it was not possible to reach an agreed solution in negotiations.
2. The applicant is advised that owing to the fundamental concerns expressed in the reasons for refusal, an ecology survey was not requested as part of the application process. However the applicant should note that this would be necessary as part of any future submission.
3. The applicant is advised that this application has been refused for the reason stated above, and taking into account the following documents:

Job No. 2196, Drawing No's. 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, (Published 09.09. 2022)

Job No. 2196, Drawing No's. 201 REV A, 202 REV A, 203 REV A, 204, 205, (Published 09.09.2022)

Site Location



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LOCATION AND PROPOSAL

These applications relate to the grade II listed Trinity Methodist Church (List Entry number: 1271054), which occupies a prominent position in the street scene at the corner of Chapel Street and Tannery Street in the Woodhouse area of Sheffield, along with a small area of land to its west. The church is no longer in use and is understood to have been vacant since 2009.

The building is a very fine and near-intact example of a nineteenth-century Methodist chapel, designed in a Romanesque-revival style with a gable end show-front onto the street scene. Construction was completed in 1879 at a time of sustained expansion and division within the wider Methodist Church when its architecture was reaching maturity.

Externally, the chapel's general bulk and stocky proportions are blended with a notable and contrastingly delicate richness of ornament and texture. Despite a long period of vacancy, the condition of the exterior is largely unaffected with the exception of broken windows and boarded up doorways.

The interior of the chapel, which is organised in a voluminous auditory plan form, is where the majority of its historic interest and significance resides. The openness of the internal space with the elegant tiered gallery supported on slender iron columns and impressive central rostrum all facilitate the Methodist principles of congregational worship, being acoustically and visually designed to give prominence to the pulpit and uninterrupted sightlines for every member of the congregation. Despite the period of vacancy, which has seen theft, vandalism, water ingress and animal infestation resulting in the loss or damage of some historic fabric and internal fixtures and fittings, the vast majority of the interior has survived well. The chapel retains almost a full suite of original fixtures and fittings, many of which are of high quality including a full set of box pews including curved pews within the gallery, the impressive pulpit with organ case above and the loosely Jacobean gallery front. The damages and losses during this period are regrettable but have not reduced the legibility of the building or the strong connection that the design and spatial quality of its interior make to its special interest; even in its current condition the building benefits from an important and unusually intact nineteenth century interior.

The entrance into the chapel from Chapel Street is marked by steps through handsome stone posts flanked by traceried cast iron railings which are also grade II listed (List Entry number: 1247076).

The quality and architectural expressions of the chapel, both internally and externally, demonstrate the level of investment the community made to it, and their aspirations, at a time when church building in other parts of the country was in decline. Its interior in particular embodies the tension between the Methodist teachings of frugality and divinity, and the materialistic expectations of Victorian society.

The land to the west of the building is bound by a low stone wall to the north and west, and the gable end of 40 Tannery Street, a two storey domestic scale dwelling

to the south. The historic use of this parcel of land has not been established; the presence of marked stones and some historic records suggest it was used for burials prior to the construction of the chapel, but some anecdotal evidence suggests it may not have been and was a 'memorial garden'. During the period of vacancy, the land had become overgrown with vegetation and has now recently been mostly cleared.

In terms on land outside the application site, immediately to the east across a strip of hard surfacing is the former Sunday school/church hall where the congregation is now based, and to the south is 40 Tannery Street with its gable end forming the boundary of the undeveloped area, and its rear amenity space extending behind the church.

The character and appearance of the surrounding area is varied: there are a number of attractive vernacular stone built cottages and terraces along Chapel Street and Tannery Street which sit alongside more modern stone and brick domestic scale buildings, with a larger scale Co-op supermarket across Chapel Street to the north, and a modern community centre across Stradbroke Road to the west.

It is proposed to convert the listed church building into 8no. residential apartments comprising:

- 1no studio apartment – 30m²
- 3no one bed apartments – all 43m²
- 4no two bed duplexes – 94m², 94m², 74m², and 63m²

To facilitate this conversion, very significant internal changes would be required including the removal of most of the interior partitions and walls, structures, fixtures and fittings including:

- Pews, pulpit, organ and organ case
- Internal walls defining the lobby and vestry
- Rounded gallery, balustrade, benches and the upper part of the staircases
- Most of the wall and ceiling decorative detailing

Retained internal features would be limited to the entrance lobby walls and vestibule doors, most of the rounded staircases either side of the lobby, the cast iron pillars which hold up the gallery, and some of the wall and ceilings decorative detailing.

The cleared internal space would be extensively subdivided to create the 8no. units across three levels with internal additions including:

- Full first floor at approximately the height of the existing gallery
- Mezzanine floor across the full length of the building and set in from each side
- Party walls splitting the building into four quadrants on all three levels
- One new staircase between the ground and first floors

- Four new staircases between the first and mezzanine floors, one within each two bed duplex
- Internal walls between communal access/circulation routes and the units
- Internal walls to define bedrooms, bathrooms and WCs within each unit

External changes to the building are also proposed including:

- Replacement of windows on both side elevations with clear glass (currently stained glass)
- Addition of ramp access and stairs, and increasing the size of terrace at the front entrance
- Changing the direction step on to the east side entrance

Windows on the front elevation would be retained and repaired, along with the rainwater goods, stonework, boundary treatments and roof.

The parcel of land to the west of the church is proposed to be laid with permeable paving and used as car parking with nine spaces including one accessible space, with a narrow strip of soft landscaping on the inside of the boundary wall along Chapel Street. Two new access points would be created through the stone boundary wall: a pedestrian entrance from Chapel Street and a vehicular entrance from Tannery Street.

It is proposed to erect a bin store enclosure for four of the apartments within the car park area and to utilise the existing boiler house to the rear of the church for a bin and cycle store for the other four apartments.

As the proposed development would necessitate physical alterations to the Grade II listed church and its boundary treatments, both planning permission and listed building consent are required, and this report covers both applications.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There have been two previous rounds of planning application and listed building consent applications relating use of this church for apartments and work to facilitate this.

Applications 12/01336/FUL and 12/01337/LBC sought consent for 12no apartments (all two bed) and were refused 28.11.2012. A subsequent appeal was dismissed 29.01.2014. The Planning Inspector agreed with two of the reasons for the refusal: harm to the listed building and living conditions for prospective and neighbouring occupiers; but did not agree that highway safety was a reason for refusal.

Applications 15/04556/FUL and 15/04557/LBC sought consent for 8no apartments (3no one bed, 1no two bed, 4no three bed) and were withdrawn 17 March 2016 following discussions between the applicant and LPA, during which the applicant was advised that this level of subdivision and internal 'strip out' was unacceptable, and it was suggested the pre-application advice was sought for one or two residential units to allow the retention of the most significant features of the interior

of the building.

Pre-application advice was sought in early 2022 (22/00186/PREAPP) in relation to another 8no apartment scheme (4no one bed, 1no two bed, 3no three bed). Advice was given that the conversion to residential was likely to be acceptable, and suggested the 8 units could be accommodated, but raised concerns about the extent of the intervention needed, the width of the mezzanine and the loss of internal fixtures and fittings. It is noted that no Heritage Statement or Viability Appraisal was submitted with this advice request thus limiting the scope of the advice.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

There have been two rounds of consultation with the public and statutory consultees: one when the applications were first validated, and another when further assessment work and amendments to the proposal were submitted.

The application is being presented to planning committee because it has generated a considerable amount of public interest, including the submission of a petition with 95 signatures in support of the proposal on the basis it provides one and two bed apartments.

13 written representations (eight support, four object, one neutral) have been made:

Support

- The development would be an opportunity to retain and make use of a deteriorating structure
- The development would be an investment in the area
- The development would offer natural surveillance to this part of Woodhouse

Object

- There would be potential for overlooking [*windows on rear elevation and new access point into building have since been omitted from the proposal*]
- The proposal would be overdevelopment of the building
- There are more suitable uses for the building
- The development would result in the loss of internal features
- Concerns over land levels and drainage in car park
- The development would increase traffic and parking pressure
- The submission does not addressing NPPF requirements for information

Newly elected Councillor Alison Norris was the lead petitioner for the above petition in support of the proposal prior to her election.

Councillors Mick Rooney and Paul Wood, and former Councillor Jackie Satur, have written in support of the application provided it includes one and two bedroom apartments.

Historic Building and Places, The Victorian Society and Historic England have been consulted during both round of consultation, and all three organisations have

raised significant concerns about the proposal relating to the loss of internal features, the level of subdivision and the replacement of windows, as well as questioning the applicant's assertion that the parcel of land to west has not been used for burials. Historic England have also highlighted that they hold records with a good level of detail about the use of the chapel, including seating plans which provide an insight into the demographics and standing of members of the congregation.

Sheffield's Conservation Advisory Group were also consulted; they noted that the church has a fine interior and is the most significant listed building in Woodhouse, and despite its poor state of repair it could not support the application due to the lack of information about the retention of interior features.

RESPONSE TO REPRESENTATIONS

The issues raised in consultations responses are covered in the following planning assessment, including the suitability of the site for alternative uses which would ordinarily not form a material consideration but in the case of heritage assets is relevant in the context of less harmful alternative viable uses.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The development plan is the starting point for the determination of planning applications, and it comprises the policies and proposals map of the Unitary Development Plan, and the policies of the Core Strategy.

Where development plan policies do not align with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) their weight is reduced and, as is the case in respect of the impact of the development on the listed building, the NPPF position becomes a central consideration.

It is important to note that in this case, despite Sheffield City Council only demonstrating a 3.63 year supply of deliverable housing sites, the so-called 'tilted balance' set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is not engaged. This is because paragraph 11d)i offers an exception to this tilted balance in cases where assets that are protected by the NPPF, including heritage assets, would be affected in such a way that that consideration alone would provide a clear reason for refusal. As set out later in this report, harm to the heritage asset in this case is sufficient to warrant a refusal.

Set against this context, and with consideration the nature and setting of the proposal, the key issues in this case are:

- Land use and density
- Impact on the listed building
- Archaeology
- Living conditions
- Character, landscape, and design
- Highways

Land Use

Principle

The UDP Proposals Map locates the application site within a Housing Area where policy H10 (Development in Housing Areas) offers preference to a residential uses meaning there is no land use policy conflict for the proposed development, although its acceptability rests on its compliance with other relevant policies and the NPPF. Policy H10 also lists a number of other acceptable uses for land within housing areas, which is a relevant consideration in the in the context of the NPPF's position on heritage which is covered later in the report.

The emerging Sheffield Local Plan sees the boundary of the Woodhouse District Centre amended to include the application site, and as such emerging policy NC10 (Development in District and Local Centres) would be relevant. This policy would offer preference to commercial, business and service uses (excluding offices) within the area but considers a number of other uses acceptable, including residential, where they would not dominate the preferred uses. Whilst this policy is only afforded very limited weight at this stage owing to the early stage of Plan preparation, it is relevant to consider that provided the 'dominance' test was met, a residential conversion would not conflict with this policy and that a number of other uses would be acceptable, or indeed preferred.

Density

Policy CS26 (Efficient Use of Housing Land and Accessibility) sets density ranges for different parts of the city, with the application site having a suggested density of 30-50 dwellings per hectare, although the policy offers flexibility to these ranges relating to design, character and sensitive areas, with heritage referred to as one such sensitivity. This complies with the NPPF's encouragement of the efficient use of land which invites consideration of need, viability, services, character and design. In this instance, the provision of 8 units within the 625m² application site represents a density of 128 dwellings per hectare which exceeds the target range, although that is not unusual for apartment schemes and represents the efficient use of land, so can in principle be supported.

Built Heritage

As this report deals with both the planning and listed building consent application, it is important to note that this section of the report forms the sole consideration for the listed building consent application, whilst the planning application is considered within the much the wider scope of topics covered in this report.

Decisions about development proposals are made in the context of the Council's statutory duty, contained under sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), to have special regard to the desirability of preserving heritage assets and their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Policy BE19 (Development Affecting Listed Buildings) looks for development to preserve the character and appearance of listed buildings and offers preference to the building remaining in its original use. Whilst offering a similar level of protection, the restrictiveness of this policy and the limited scope of considerations it invites

does not align with the NPPF so its weight is substantially reduced, and instead the NPPF's tests will be the central consideration.

Like local policy, the NPPF takes a resolute position on the protection of heritage because their preservation is in the public interest; they are finite, irreplaceable and intrinsically linked to the history of their locality. The Framework directs decision makers to consider development proposals through the lens of significance. It looks to consider the significance of a heritage asset, and the qualities of the asset and its setting that this significance is derived from, and then to assess the level of harm to that significance that would arise as a result of a development. The central thread of the NPPF's position on heritage assets, at paragraph 199, is to afford great weight to the conservation of this significance. Different tests are applied for different levels of harm and in this case, as explained below, the harm caused to the asset would be substantial which necessitates the application of the test set out in paragraph 201:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use*

Significance

Heritage significance can be defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest can be derived from any archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interest it possesses. Trinity Methodist Church exhibits significant architectural interest being built in the Romanesque revival style. A number of features typical of this style are apparent including a projecting central gable with venetian window, clasping buttresses and pinnacles above an arch headed double doorway. Arch headed windows are a significant feature to both front and side elevations of the building, hood moulds further emphasising the principal elevation of the building.

However, Trinity Methodist Church also derives a large part of its significance from its interior, which even after a period of vacancy is unusually intact. Its spatial qualities, being the triple height space and auditory layout, are fundamental to understanding its original use, and the fixtures, fittings, and decorative details tell an interesting story of the congregation and wider Methodist Church at the time of its construction and use. This intactness is also part of the historic significance of chapel in that it provides evidence of the Methodist community in this part of Sheffield, but also wider communal value such as individual family association with the church and evidence of the approaches to social values, particularly the

ordering of pews.

There is also potential for archaeological interest in the church grounds.

Harm to Significance

The proposed physical changes to the interior are very extensive and cumulatively they would represent a complete loss of the legibility of the internal space. It is acknowledged that the proposal has made some attempts at preserving spatial qualities, e.g. with the mezzanine floor being stepped in from the sides to retain some internal height, but owing to the amount of subdivision throughout the building and the narrow width of these void spaces in the context of the space as a whole, these do not go far enough to preserve the important contribution the spatial qualities make to the significance of the building.

The change of use would also see an almost complete removal of all fixtures, fittings and decorative detailing. Whilst the proposed retention of some internal fixtures is welcomed, e.g. ceiling detailing and the columns which hold up the gallery, in the context of the proposed development as a whole this would do very little to preserve the contribution that these features make to the building's significance.

The retention and repair of most of the exterior of the building is welcomed, but the replacement of the stained glass windows on both side elevations would nonetheless have an impact on its significance in terms of its appearance and the way its internal space is experienced. The proposed changes to the front entrance including the construction of a ramp entrance are not considered to be particularly harmful to the significance but notwithstanding this, improved accessibility to the heritage asset would outweigh any harm arising as a result of changes to the relatively intact façade.

The use of the land to the west of the church as a car park with bin storage, and the laying of hard surfacing with very limited soft landscaping, is harmful to the setting of the listed building. This harm is caused by the loss of the relationship between the church and its grounds, the nature of which was ancillary to the church (either as a memorial garden or a graveyard) and also forms an important part of the open setting within the street which increases the prominence of the church.

Concerns were raised with the applicant about the extensive subdivision, loss of so much of the interior fabric and detailing, and the replacement windows following the first round of consultation, and suggestions from officers and statutory consultees were shared which could have reduced the harm that would be caused by these interventions, e.g. omitting the mezzanine floor, and incorporating historic fixtures like the pews into the fittings and fixtures needed for residential use. Some changes were made to the proposal following this, including a reduction on the size of the mezzanine and reducing the amount of subdivision within each residential unit, but these changes did not amount to a meaningful change that addressed these concerns and to reduce the level of harm. The above NPPF policy test for 'substantial harm' was also highlighted to the applicant at that stage, and

information to justify this harm was invited in order to comply with the NPPF's test. No further information was provided in that regard.

Policy Test

As above, Paragraph 201 directs local planning authorities to refuse consent for such harmful developments with two specific exceptions.

Exception One

...unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm...is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm

The level of harm caused by the proposal is so substantial that the public benefits needed to outweigh it would be very considerable; particularly in this case where the story told by the interior of this building is intrinsically linked to the history of the local population.

The public benefits offered by this proposal would be the modest contribution of eight residential units to the city's housing land supply, the investment into the area, and the building itself being bought back into use to regenerate this part of Woodhouse.

Beyond stating that the proposal would provide this residential accommodation, the applicant has not submitted any information or evidence to demonstrate why this should be considered a substantial public benefit. Representations from Councillors and the submitted petition both support the proposal on the basis it would provide one and two bedroom residential units. In order to come to a view on the extent to which this would offer a public benefit, and in the absence of any area specific information, the Housing Market Area (HMA) profiles have been reviewed. The application site falls with the South East HMA 2021 which covers a large area of the city - Woodhouse one of 16 areas covered by it - so its findings are not a precise way of assessing house need in each neighbourhood, particularly for proposals like this one which are small in the context of such a large area. Whilst the HMA identifies a shortfall of one and two bed units across the whole south east of the city, it highlights that the housing stock in Woodhouse includes a higher percentage of flats than the city as a whole.

Although a contribution to housing supply at a time when our housing land supply is below the 5 year target would offer a limited public benefit, given the fairly small scale of the proposal and that the HMA does not point toward an acute need for this type of accommodation in this area, it is considered that the provision of these units would not constitute a substantial public benefit, even when taken together with the reuse of the currently vacant building and the investment the area.

Exception Two

...or all of the following apply:

- a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;*
- and*

- b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use*

The location, size, or internal layout of Trinity Methodist Church does not prevent all reasonable uses. There would be no conflict with the key land use policy H10 to convert the building into a number of other uses which would require less physical changes including offices, restaurant, community space or recreational facility. Similarly, the emerging policy NC10 would offer preference to commercial, or community uses (except offices) and could support a residential conversion depending on the dominance of that use across the wider District Centre. A residential conversion involving less physical intervention with a reduced number of units, and more meaningful incorporation of existing fixtures and fittings, would still represent an efficient use of land.

No evidence has been provided that these alternative, less harmful uses would not be viable, or that appropriate marketing has taken place to pursue them. The application documentation makes very limited references to unsuccessful attempts to find alternative uses but has not supported this with the necessary evidence. The optimum viable use of the chapel is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. Notwithstanding this, should residential use be demonstrated as the optimum viable use, there are different levels of impact that can be caused by any conversion and the scale of conversion would need to be clearly and convincingly justified. Conversion to fewer units would cause less harm than a more intensive conversion e.g. the installation of the mezzanine floor. Currently, eight residential units have not been justified. No evidence has been provided to demonstrate that attempts to source grant funding or alternative ownership have been explored.

As above, the public benefit of bringing the building back into use for the proposed use and the scale of conversion is not considered to outweigh the harm, particularly without any evidence to say this would be the only viable use of the building.

As the applicant has not provided the necessary evidence to demonstrate that the proposal falls into one of these exceptions, the NPPF is clear that owing to the substantial harm the development proposal would cause to the significance of Trinity Methodist Church, the application should be refused.

Archaeology

Policy BE22 looks to protect archaeological sites from damage and destruction, and depending on their significance either requires them to be preserved in situ or to secure an adequate record. As with built heritage, this policy position is not wholly in line with the NPPF's approach which in the case of non-designated heritage assets invites a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Paragraph 194 is clear that

the onus is on the applicant to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment for sites with the potential to contain buried archaeology which would determine whether further assessment work is required and allow an understanding of the archaeology's significance.

The potential area of buried archaeological interest in this case is the parcel of land to the west of the chapel which is proposed to be used for car parking. According to information held by the Council, a chapel was built on this site in 1814 and had a burial ground, with grave markers found on site predating the construction of the existing chapel. The applicant has submitted very limited information about this, relying wholly on anecdotal evidence that burials have not taken place and proposed work in the area is carried out under a watching brief.

Further information was requested from the applicant to understand the nature of the work that would be taking place to form the car park to come to a view on whether a watching brief would be sufficient, i.e. existing and proposed land levels, drainage works, and surface treatments. Insufficient information has been provided, and we are therefore unable to come to a view on whether the potential for harm to the burials and evidence of the earlier chapel is such that a watching brief is an appropriate response, or whether further assessment work or alternative designs would be required. In light of the NPPF's position on heritage assets, this lack of information is also a reason for refusal.

Living Conditions and Accessibility

NPPF paragraph 185's protection of living conditions aligns with both policy H14 (conditions on development in housing areas), which protects residents for pollution or nuisance, and looks to avoid overdevelopment to ensure residents are not deprived of light or privacy, and policy H5 (flats, bed-sitters and shared housing) which supports the creation of flats provided they would provide satisfactory living conditions.

Sheffield City Council has no adopted space standards, but the National Space Standards and South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide (SYRG) provide useful benchmarking for living space, as shown in the table below (where two figures are given, this is dependent on occupation, not a minimum and maximum):

	One bed	Two bed
National Space Standards	37-50m ²	70-79m ²
SYRG Space Standards	33-47m ²	62m ²

Prospective Occupiers

Space

The studio apartment on the ground floor at 30m² is below the lower end of the less generous SYRG standard. The 3no one bed apartments all at 43m² align fairly well with both sets of standards. The smaller two bed at 63m² is just meeting SYDG. The remaining 3no two beds at 94m², 94m² and 74m² meet or exceed the

standards. Taken as a whole, the space provided in each unit is considered acceptable. In the context of the above NPPF policy test for heritage assets and noting a conversion to less units would result in less harmful subdivision, the fact that some units only just meet the minimum standards demonstrates that a conversion to less units would not result in overly large apartments. The layout of the internal space and the proximity of the building to other built development does not raise any concerns about noise, privacy, outlook or daylight.

No outdoor amenity space is provided as part of the proposed scheme, which is not unusual for smaller scale apartment schemes, but given the site's proximity to several areas of publicly accessible open space this is not a concern.

Neighbouring Occupiers

The nearest residential property to the application site is 40 Tannery Street, which abuts the parcel of land to the west of the site with their amenity space extending to the rear of the church. Early concerns about overlooking from new windows on the rear elevation were addressed by omitting them from the proposal. The use of the parcel of land to the west of the church for car parking would generate noise from car parking and manoeuvring, but given the fairly low number of spaces within the car park, and the proximity to Chapel Street which is a fairly busy road, it is considered unlikely that this additional noise would result in a significant change to the prevailing noise environment and would not give rise to any concerns about living conditions and nuisance.

Design, Landscaping and Character

Policies H14 (Conditions on Development in Housing Areas), BE5 (Building Design and Siting) and CS74 (Design Principles) all look for good, high quality design, and policy BE6 (landscape design) looks for good quality landscape design that integrates well with existing features and promotes interest and nature conservation; these policies reflect the importance placed on design and character by the NPPF.

The repair of stonework, roofing and other building elements would have a positive effect on the street scene. Whilst bringing the area of land next to the church back into use could have a positive effect on the street scene, it would be preferable to see a much 'softer' use and layout which incorporated more planting to retain the characterful relationship of a religious building and garden; a less extensive conversion could negate the need for car parking and allow a more sympathetic treatment of this part of the site. The replacement of the stained glass windows on the side elevations are not ideal as their retention and repair would make a positive contribution to the appearance and character of the building, and as above raise concerns in terms of heritage, but provided the materiality of the frames was sympathetic to the building this alone would not represent a conflict with design policies.

Very little information has been provided about the design of the bin storage within the parking area. Whilst its footprint and siting are likely to be acceptable in design terms, its massing, appearance and materiality would need to be sympathetic to its

setting and with no detail it is not possible to come to a view on policy compliance.

Highways, Parking and Access

Policies H5 and H14 look for sufficient off-street parking for new residential development and the Car Parking Guidelines suggest a maximum of 14 spaces would be needed for this development (one per one bed dwelling (4), two per two bed dwelling (8), and one visitor space per four dwellings (2)). Owing to the sustainable location of the application site very close to the local centre and public transport routes in the vicinity, and with consideration of the NPPF's position on promoting sustainable transport, the proposed parking provision of 8 spaces and one accessible space is sufficient for this development and the layout of the parking area allows 6m clearance which is sufficient for manoeuvring and allowing all cars to enter and exit in a forward gear.

Reduced parking provision, including potentially a car free approach, may be considered acceptable for the conversion of this building depending on the nature and intensity of the use and the existing availability of parking in the area. This is because, as outlined above, a different approach to this part of the site would offer important benefits in respect of character and the setting of the listed building, and in any case the presence of archaeological interest could be a constraint to developing it.

Biodiversity

Policy GE11 (Nature Conservation and Development) requires the design, siting and landscaping of development to respect and promote nature consideration and mitigate harmful effects of the development on nature, which aligns fairly well with the NPPF although the Framework focuses on securing net gains.

No information has been submitted in respect of the potential biodiversity interest in the building that has developed during the period of vacancy, e.g. bats, therefore we have insufficient information to assess whether the proposal is likely to negatively impact upon them, and whether there is a need to incorporate measures to offset this biodiversity impact within the scheme. Owing to the fundamental heritage issues being identified early on and subsequently failing to be resolved, this information was not requested during the course of the application, but the applicant has since been advised that this would be required in any future application or appeal.

The small strip of landscaping within the car park could offer some limited biodiversity interest to the site with an appropriate species mix and long-term maintenance.

Sustainability

Policy CS64 (Climate Change, Resources and Sustainable Design of Development) require all developments to reduce emissions and function in a changing climate, with policy CS65 (Renewable Energy and Carbon Reduction) requires all significant developments (more than five dwellings) to incorporate

decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy, and minimise energy demand.

The limitations of converting a historic building, in terms of energy saving and generation, is recognised, and the need to minimise harmful physical changes and alterations would outweigh the need to incorporate intrusive and impactful sustainability measures. The applicant has submitted a Sustainability Statement setting out the measures that could be incorporated, including low energy bulbs and A rated appliances, which in the context of this conversion would meet the thrust of this policy.

Drainage

Policy CS67 (Flood Risk Management) looks to reduce the extend and impact of flooding by ensuring all developments significantly limit surface water run-off, and the NPPF at paragraph 167 requires decision makers to ensure developments do not lead to an increase in flood risk.

The site is not located in an area at risk of flooding. The proposal would see no change to the footprint of built form at the site, and the use of permeable paving to the car parking area would significantly limit any increase in run-off.

Bin Storage

Inadequate or impractical bin storage can lead to future residents leaving their wheelie bins on the pavement which can have an impact on the accessibility and safety of the public highway, and on the character of an area, both are which are protected under aforementioned policies. It is proposed to make use of an existing boiler house to the rear of the church for bin storage for some of the flats, but the only point of access into this store is outside the application site, and gaining access through a new doorway within the application site would require the infilling of the external stairway to the cellar of the church and involve using stairs to move between the public highway and the bin store. Despite requests, no information has been provided about if or how these issues would be overcome, so there remains a concern about the potential impact of the scheme in this regard.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed to convert the vacant, grade II listed Trinity Methodist Church into 8no apartments which would involve significant internal alterations, some external alterations, and the use of the adjacent garden as a car park.

The pertinent issue in the determination of these applications is the impact of this proposal on the listed building in the context of the NPPF. Whilst the proposal's modest contribution to housing supply and the reuse of this building would offer a limited public benefits, they would not outweigh the very high level of harm that this proposal would cause. Furthermore neither the building itself, nor adopted or emerging land use policy, would prevent a conversion to a number of less harmful alternative uses, including a less intensive residential conversion, but no meaningful evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that this very harmful proposal would represent the least harmful viable use of this building.

In the days leading up to the deadline of this report, some discussion took place with the applicant about the preparation and submission of a Viability Assessment to justify the harm. This document was first requested by officers in February alongside other necessary evidence e.g. to demonstrate alternative uses had been marketed. As this document could take months to prepare, submit and scrutinise, and alone would not be sufficient to assess compliance with the NPPF's requirement to justify the harm, we cannot continue to delay the determination of this application whilst waiting for it. The NPPF is clear that the onus is on the applicant to justify development which harms the significance of heritage assets but unfortunately no such justification has not been provided, which leaves no choice but to recommend the planning and listed building consents for refusal.

In addition to the harm to the significance of the built heritage asset, there is a fundamental lack of information about the potential impact of the proposal on buried archaeology. Despite repeated requests for details about the car parking element of the proposal, that would likely negate the need for onerous and time consuming archaeology assessment work, no such information has been provided. Very shortly before the deadline for this report, a drawing was submitted showing typical sections for car park groundworks but this does not provide sufficient detail to assess the proposal, and the timing of its submission did not allow any meaningful consultation with archaeology specialists. Therefore the lack of information about buried archaeology is also a reason to recommend the planning application for refusal.

There are other concerns with the proposal relating to the bin storage, landscaping and biodiversity, but these are not considered to be so significant that they would be a reason for refusal. If the fundamental heritage and archaeology policy conflicts could be resolved in a future application, these other concerns are likely to be overcome with minor amendments and the submission of further information.

In respect of other the issues covered in this report, living conditions, highways, sustainability and drainage, there are no policy conflicts that would raise concerns about the future conversion potential of this building, and any additional detail required in relation to these specific areas for a future application could be dealt with by planning conditions.

It is recognised that the condition of this listed building is deteriorating. Its repair and upkeep requires a viable use to be found to prevent irreversible damage and total loss, and identifying and facilitating that viable use is in the public interest. During pre-application discussions and over the course of this determination, Council officers and statutory consultees have made it clear that there is no in principle objection to converting the building. There has been considerable and proactive engagement with the applicant to try to overcome concerns by inviting a reduction of harm and the justification of any necessary harm. Unfortunately, this engagement has not resulted in any meaningful amendments to the scheme, or the timely submission of necessary and sufficient information.

Therefore, in light of the unjustified harm to the listed building and its setting that is not outweighed by public benefit, contrary to policy BE19 of the UDP and paragraph 202 of the NPPF, and the lack of information about buried archaeology

as required by policy BE22 of the UDP and paragraph 194 of the NPPF, it is recommended that the planning application and listed building consent application are refused.

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