



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2017

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P2114/W/17/3168725

**Sandford Methodist Church, Shanklin Road, Sandford, Ventnor,
Isle of Wight, PO38 3AJ**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Methodist Church, Isle of Wight Circuit against the decision of Isle of Wight Council.
 - The application Ref P/00686/16, dated 9 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as: "Change of use from a place of worship to unit of living accommodation. Establish principle prior to building being sold. (Detailed plans to be submitted by future purchaser)."
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a change of use from a place of worship to a unit of living accommodation at Sandford Methodist Church, Shanklin Road, Sandford, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, PO38 3AJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P/00686/16, dated 9 May 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location plan, Site plan, Plan as Proposed, Plan as Existing.
 - 3) The dwelling hereby permitted shall not be occupied until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with details that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority for the parking and turning of vehicle(s) so that they may enter and exit the public highway in a forward gear. This space shall not be used for any purpose other than that approved in accordance with this condition.
 - 4) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no fence, gate or wall shall be erected across the vehicular access to the site.
 - 5) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling hereby permitted the existing post/chain barrier across the vehicular access shall be removed in its entirety and remain as such in perpetuity.

- 6) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no dormer windows or any other enlargement of the dwellinghouse hereby approved consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof shall be permitted.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have removed the words "*Establish principle prior to building being sold. (Detailed plans to be submitted by future purchaser)*" in my formal decision above as these are not a description of development.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the change of use of the church on the local community.

Reasons

4. This appeal concerns a detached Victorian Methodist church of modest proportions which sits amongst a small number of residential properties on Shanklin Road. The wider surrounding area to the appeal site is open and rural. The proposal is for a change of use of the church to a dwellinghouse.
5. Policy DM7 of the Isle of Wight Core Strategy (2012) resists the loss of existing social and community infrastructure facilities. As set out in the supporting text to Policy DM7 the loss of such facilities can result in adverse consequences such as unsustainable travel patterns and isolated communities. To this end, Policy DM7 will only permit their loss where it can be demonstrated that a) the facility is no longer needed for its original purpose, or viable for any other community use; or b) if appropriate, an alternative facility will be provided in a location with at least an equal level of accessibility for the community it is intended to serve.
6. The appellant states that the exiting church is no longer needed. It closed in October 2015 having a congregation of five, only three of which were local. At that time the church was used for Sunday worship only. Monthly coffee mornings had stopped as had occasional concerts held at the church. The appellant states that the worship needs of the former congregation are now met by other local churches. There are other Methodist churches within relatively close proximity of the appeal site in Shanklin, Wroxall and Godshill and I saw at my site visit that Wroxall and Shanklin are easily accessible via a regular bus service operating outside of the appeal site. There is nothing before me to contradict the appellant's position. I am therefore satisfied, on the evidence before me, that the church is no longer needed for its original purpose.
7. In terms of whether the church is viable for any other community use I note my colleague's findings in appeal APP/P2114/A/12/2184648 that demand for community use can only be assessed by a thorough marketing of the premises for sale or rent and for a reasonable period. Sandford Methodist Church was marketed by an estate agent in June 2016. 218 sets of details were distributed and there were in excess of 100 enquires and 27 viewings. Of these only one non-residential enquiry was received but was not pursued. I consider this to be a reasonable marketing exercise, sufficient to demonstrate that the church

is not viable for any other community use and there is no evidence before me to the contrary. As such I consider no further marketing is necessary.

Conclusion and conditions

8. Based on my findings above I consider that the criteria set out in Policy DM7 a) is satisfied. Part b) is an alternative to a) therefore there is no need for me to address this in any detail. In any event, as set out above, there are alternative accessible facilities in the area. I therefore conclude that the change of use of the church would not have an adverse effect on the local community. I also find no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework which sets out that decisions should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.
9. I have attached the standard time limit condition and included a plans condition as this provides certainty. In the interest of highway safety I have also included conditions to provide parking and turning on site and restricting the erection of gates at the vehicular access.
10. There is no clear justification before me for the removal of permitted development rights with respect to the erection of porches, the insertion of windows or roof lights, or the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of the dwelling hereby approved. I do, however, consider that roof extension(s) or the installation of dormer window(s) would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Victorian church and as such a condition removing these rights is justified.
11. Subject to the above conditions, and having had regard to all matters raised, the appeal is allowed.

Hayley Butcher

INSPECTOR