

## Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 19 January 2023

**by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 02 February 2023**

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### **Appeal A Ref: APP/P0119/W/22/3305857**

#### **The Old Chapel, High Street, Marshfield SN14 8LU**

- 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 Mr and Mrs Ian and Rebecca Price against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
  - The application Ref P22/01374/HH, dated 24 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 23 April 2022.
  - The development proposed is lower the cill level of two north facing ground floor windows.
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### **Appeal B Ref: APP/P0119/Y/22/3302404**

#### **The Old Chapel, High Street, Marshfield SN14 8LU**

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
  - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Ian and Rebecca Price against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
  - The application Ref P22/01376/LB, dated 24 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 23 April 2022.
  - The works proposed are lower the cill level of two north facing ground floor windows.
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### **Decisions**

1. The appeals are dismissed.

### **Main Issue**

2. The Old Chapel is a circa 1848 former chapel converted to a dwelling and in the midst of further internal works. It is listed at Grade II as 'Former Nonconformist Chapel' and is in the Marshfield Conservation Area (the CA). In that context, the main issue to be considered is the effect of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and, linked to that, whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.

### **Reasons**

3. The former chapel interior has seen extensive alterations across its somewhat more eventful recent history, with it originally converted to an industrial use, then a mixed use and subsequently wholly residential use. Its significance thus now lies principally in its comparatively well-preserved exterior.
  4. Within the prominent, north, High Street facing elevation are four matching lancet window openings under hood moulds each within a separate bay delineated by dressed stone buttresses and set above a continuous stone plinth. A small, former vestry room with an associated doorway is to the right.
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5. The clean, horizontal emphasis of the plinth together with the repetitive, uniform composition of the bays presents a strong architectural statement likely intended to convey to the populace the high status and institutional authority of this former place of Congregational worship. The building also therefore has an important role in the character and appearance of the CA, as a noteworthy historic building within Marshfield both in architectural and cultural terms.
6. The elongated doorway openings would break through the plinth and muddle the ordered form of the lancet windows and therefore the essential uniformity of the bays, resulting in a contrived elevation with diminished design integrity. The harm that would arise would not be mitigated by introducing a lock rail across the doors, as the doors would not recreate the substantive form or robustness of the stone plinth. They would at times be open in any event.
7. The vestry appears to have contained the same style of window, which has been brought down to the floor through a chamfered opening in the plinth to create an entrance. However, the vestry is a subsidiary element of the building set well back from the principal building line. It does not have the same sense of primacy or interrelationship as the four bays which comprise the mainstay of the former chapel's elevation, and so does not serve to rationalise the scheme.
8. Reference is made to the replacement of plastic rainwater goods with cast iron, to be relocated less conspicuously at the ends of the building. However, the rainwater goods are a less significant component of the building exterior than its fenestration and so this enhancement would not compare to the harm that the proposal would cause. Likewise, reductions to the internal floorspace would be trifling within the context of the comprehensive way in which the historic internal chapel space has long been changed by partition and subdivision.
9. It follows that, overall, the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to both the significance of the listed building and the significance of the CA. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) explains that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 202 goes on to require decision makers to weigh any less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the scheme, including securing its optimum viable use.
10. In this case, that balancing exercise must take place within the context of s.16(2), s.66(1), and s.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which set a strong presumption against a grant of planning permission or listed building consent for development or works that would cause harm to the special interest of a listed building and fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area.
11. The ground floor is not well served by natural light. In this sense, and by allowing more direct access to and supervision of the garden, the proposal would promote health and well-being, with a higher standard of amenity for existing and future users. However, these would be modest public benefits and, given that the building already has its residential use, there is no substantive evidence that such works are integral to securing its long-term future. These public benefits, together with the aforementioned conservation benefits to the listed building, do not justify the harms that would be caused; harms that must each be given considerable importance and weight in the balancing exercise.

12. That conclusion also brings the proposal into conflict with Policy PSP17 of the Policies Sites and Places Plan (Adopted 2017) and Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy 2006-2027 (Adopted 2013) insofar as they seek to protect the historic environment generally, listed buildings, and conservation areas respectively.

**Planning Balance and Conclusion**

13. With specific reference to Appeal A, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no other considerations which suggest I should make a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
14. For these given reasons, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

*Matthew Jones*  
INSPECTOR