Development Management Report

Application Number: 11/00696/FUL  Parish: Shrewsbury Town Council

Grid Ref: 349256 - 312322

Proposal: Renovation and conversion of an existing church hall and 2 ancillary residential units to create three residential dwellings and ground floor retail unit with formation of new access

Site Address: St Davids Presbyterian Church Hall Belmont Bank Shrewsbury Shropshire SY1 1UB

Applicant: Mr A. Walker

Case Officer: John Bentley email: planningdmc@shropshire.gov.uk

1.0 THE PROPOSAL

1.1 The proposal is to convert the existing early C20th brick church hall / ancillary residential building, as described above, including the addition of a garage opening to the front and an additional pedestrian entrance door for the shop / beauty parlour. Cycle storage is provided for within the apartments and the garage. There are various other additions and alterations to the buildings, including window apertures and solar panels. Internally an extra floor is inserted into the church hall area, making it two floors in all, forming one residential unit. The adjacent former residential area will be two new residential apartments (three floors), with the shop / beauty parlour area forming the front part of the ground floor. The building was a church hall with residential accommodation, but has been unused for some time. The building has no external space of its own, but the proposals introduce some ‘internalised’ patios and balconies. The building is constructed of red brick and slate, with decorative stonework and windows which are similar in character to the adjoining church, which is in the process of conversion.
2.0 SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION
2.1 The site is at the top of Belmont Bank, adjacent to the former St David’s church, which is now being converted to residential apartments. To the rear is a private garden in other ownership and attached to business premises. To the South is the Lion PH car park. Belmont Bank is a narrow thoroughfare, part of the medieval fabric of the town. The building is not listed but is within the conservation area and there are listed buildings immediately adjacent. The surrounding area is very sensitive environmentally, as this is a core part of the medieval town conservation area with considerable character. The surrounding buildings are predominately Georgian, although the adjacent church is C20th.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS
3.1 Grant planning permission.

4.0 REASON FOR COMMITTEE
4.1 Local member has requested committee determination and provided appropriate planning reasons

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY
5.1 SA/08/0956/F – change of use of church into office accommodation, demolition of church hall and erection of 3 storey building to provide 4 residential units with garage underneath (withdrawn 2008).

6.0 CONSULTEE RESPONSES
6.1 SC drainage – no comments.
   □ SC Highways – no objections in principle, while concerned to avoid intensifying vehicle movements on Belmont Bank, the extra traffic generated is unlikely to have any material effect. May be issues servicing a retail unit of any size, so retail unit may need restricting in scope.
   □ Fire Service – advice.
   □ Shrewsbury Town Council – support.
   □ SC Conservation – concerns about design, window details and materials (which included timber and render) of original application, but satisfied with the changes made to the application at officers’ request. Conditions suggested on materials and details.

7.0 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS
7.1 5 objections, including Town Centre Residents Association:-
   □ Garage and shop present traffic / pedestrian hazard in this narrow street, particularly in relation to vehicles emerging from garage, or customers emerging from shop.
   □ Shop is inappropriate in this location, given shop vacancies in town centre
   □ Potential noise and disturbance from the shop
   □ Concerns about overlooking to rear
2 of the above objectors have stated they do not object in principle to conversion of the premises to residential, however.

One written support e-mail for scheme in its entirety and one stating 'no comments'.

8.0 PLANNING POLICY
8.1 Central Government Guidance:
PPS1, PPS4, PPS5

8.2 Shropshire Core Strategy: Policies CS2, CS6, CS16.

9.0 THE MAIN PLANNING ISSUES
- The principle of development and retail development in this location
- Design and appearance in relation to the conservation area and adjacent listed buildings
- Traffic and highway safety
- Impact on neighbours amenity and privacy

10.0 OFFICER APPRAISAL
10.1 Principle of Development
10.1.1 In principle the reuse of the building and its retention are supported, as long as proposals are sympathetic to the conservation area and the historic fabric of the town. A previous application for a taller redevelopment of the site was withdrawn, following public objections and concerns expressed by planning officers.

10.1.2 The site is just outside the main shopping area of the town centre, but in principle this does not preclude the establishment of a small shop / beauty salon in this location. There are no planning policies which preclude this and it is difficult to see what demonstrable harm this would cause in retail impact terms, given the proposed shop / beauty salon is only 28 sq m in area and of very low impact. In addition the site was formerly a church hall (with the church next door) and would have attracted more human activity than a small shop.

10.2 Design, Scale and Character
10.2.1 The red-brick and slate building itself is not listed, and is utilitarian in character, but is nevertheless sympathetic to the character of the conservation area. It has to be seen as a feature associated with the adjoining church and therefore it is important that common features of association are retained. It has some good ornamental stone features and leaded windows, which echo similar features in the church next door. The main visible impact is that part of the building adjacent to the Lion Car Park, which will have additional window apertures and glazing (plus solar panels), a small roof terrace area, and the dormer windows will be rebuilt slightly lower. The proposals for this elevation
10.2.2 The proposals were subject to considerable pre-application discussion. Also, as stated above, the designs and materials have been altered from the original submission, following concerns expressed by officers. In particular, render and timber aspects have been removed and replaced by brick-work (which is considered is more in keeping with the character and appearance of the area, new fenestration has been amended, all windows with leaded lights are retained and the garage door arrangement has been redesigned to be more traditional in appearance. Stonework will be retained and replicated in the additional exterior works (eg. around the garage aperture).

10.2.3 In terms of design and appearance, officers have been concerned to ensure that the conversion is sympathetic to the original building and the surrounding conservation area. In particular, efforts have been made to minimise alterations and new apertures in the building. The main alteration is probably the addition of the garage and it is considered that this has been done suitably sympathetically. Alterations for the shop front and door are designed to harmonise with the existing features. Elsewhere window apertures have been minimised, while acknowledging the need to let light into upper floors in this otherwise dark interior. The roof-mounted solar panels are considered acceptable to make the building more sustainable and would be permitted development, if added later, in any case.

10.3 Impact on neighbours/residential amenity / privacy
10.3.2 Concerns have been expressed about disturbance from a shop / beauty parlour. However, this is not considered to be a significant material issue as the shop is very small and it has to be considered that some activity is normal in the town centre and that the buildings were formerly a church and church hall which generated considerable activity. Hours of opening of the shop can be conditioned. The shop area totals only 28 sq m in area, which is quite small and will generate a very limited amount of activity. Although the application states that the use is ‘retail’ the proposal is actually for a ‘beauty salon’, which is a ‘sui generis’ use. It is suggested that any permission is granted subject to condition that the use be A1 retail or beauty salon (the applicant is not intending to use it for both activities, but assumed that a beauty parlour was a retail use).

10.3.2 The other main impact would be potential overlooking of the private garden to the rear from windows in the building (although this garden is attached to a
business rather than residential premises), but these aspects can be controlled by use of obscure glass. Other windows are of such a height so as to prevent any overlooking problems. The proposed apex window in the rear facing roof gable has now been removed and is to be replaced by a small slit window. There have to be new window apertures in the conversion to create sufficient light for living in the converted building, but these have been minimised as far as possible. The proposed development has some patios and balconies incorporated, but these have been internalised or orientated so as not to create overlooking problems, whilst also providing the occupants with some external amenity space (bearing in mind the building has no external garden or space).

10.4. Traffic and Highway Safety
10.4.1 There are no objections from the Highways Officer, who considers the increase in traffic will not be material. Bearing in mind that the buildings were once a church and church hall, the number of people visiting the site will be small in comparison. Given this is a narrow road, drivers and pedestrians should be aware of each other and should be proceeding with caution. This is also a pavement for pedestrians on the side of the road opposite the building. It is not considered that having a small shop will create a safety hazard. The garage is sufficient for one car only and vehicles emerging from the garage will be emerging cautiously in any case and it is not considered there is any justifiable concern about pedestrian safety. There are other similar garages in buildings elsewhere in the conservation area.

11.0 CONCLUSION
11.1 The re-use of the building is welcomed in principle and the uses proposed and amended designs submitted are acceptable and the overall proposals are considered acceptable. The proposed conversion has retained the character of the original building and its historic / design connection with the church, while allowing for a modern adaptation of the building.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 8 give the right to respect for private and family life and First Protocol Article 1 allows for the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. These have to be balanced against the rights and freedoms of others and the orderly development of the County in the interests of the Community.

First Protocol Article 1 requires that the desires of landowners must be balanced against the impact of development upon nationally important features and the impact on residents.

This legislation has been taken into account in arriving at the above recommendation.
Reason for Approval

1. The proposal is an acceptable use and conversion of a building within a conservation area. The appearance of the development is considered to be acceptable within the conservation area and the use will not be detrimental to neighbouring land users or to highways safety.

2. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority have made reference to the following national and local planning policies:

   Central Government Planning Guidance: PPS1, PPS4, PPS5

   Shropshire Core Strategy: Policies CS2, CS6, CS16.

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

   Reason: To comply with Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (As amended).

2. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans and drawings.

   Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.
3. The retail unit shown on the plans shall be used only for uses within Use Class A1 of the Use Classes Order or as a beauty salon.

Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenity of the area.

4. The retail / beauty parlour premises shall not be open for customers outside the following hours:

0830 - 1800, Mondays - Saturday

Reason: In order to maintain the amenities of the area.

5. The windows in ground floor bedroom 1 and the first floor bathroom shown on plan 408/PL/08/A shall be permanently formed as a fixed light and glazed with obscure glass and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To preserve the amenity and privacy of adjoining properties.

6. No windows or other openings shall be formed in any elevation of the building without the prior consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To preserve the amenity and privacy of adjoining properties and to preserve the visual amenity of the conservation area.

7. Details of exterior soil and vent pipes, waste pipes, rainwater goods, boiler flues and ventilation terminals, meter boxes, exterior cabling and electrical fittings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the commencement of works. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the character of the conservation area.

8. All gutters, downpipes, soil and vent pipes and other external plumbing shall be of cast iron or cast aluminium unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the conservation area.

9. No built development shall commence until samples of all external materials, including new glazing and stone, have been first submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approval details.

Reason: To safeguard the character and amenity of the conservation area.
10. The roof windows shall be of the traditional low profile metal pattern and
details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning
Authority before commencement of works. The development shall be
carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the conservation
area.

11. No joinery works shall commence until precise details of all external
windows and doors and any other external joinery have been submitted to
and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These shall
include full size details, 1:20 sections and 1:20 elevations of each joinery
item which shall then be indexed on elevations on the approved drawings.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the conservation
area.

12. All new external work and finishes, and work of making good shall match
existing original work adjacent, in respect of materials used, detailed
execution and finished appearance, except where indicated otherwise on
the drawings hereby approved.

Reason: To safeguard the character of the conservation area.

13. Prior to the commencement of development, details of all windows,
including windows to be retained, windows altered and windows replaced,
shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning
Authority. No windows shall be removed without the prior written
permission of the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be
carried out in accordance with the approved details and the approved
fenestration shall be permanently retained.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the conservation
area and the architectural integrity of the building.

14. The garage hereby approved shall not be used for any purpose other than
those incidental to the enjoyment of the associated dwelling.

Reason: To safeguard the residential character of the neighbourhood and
to prevent the extension of any business use within the development.