

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER: P05/1029

Type of approval sought	FULL PLANNING PERMISSION
Ward	SEDGLEY
Applicant	DESMOND P. O'NEILL
Location:	TIPTON STREET METHODIST CHURCH, TIPTON STREET, DUDLEY, DY3 1HE
Proposal:	CHANGE OF USE AND CONVERSION OF CHURCH TO OFFICES AND CREATION OF CAR PARK IN GRAVEYARD AREA.
Recommendation summary:	APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. The site comprises the Methodist Church and graveyard at the corner of Tipton Street and Turls Street. It is accessed from Tipton Street and has a small parking area at the rear of the church building. Adjoining to the north-west is a builders' merchants premises recently granted permission for residential redevelopment. To the north-east is a residential property in Turls Street.

PROPOSAL

2. It is proposed to convert the church to offices. Part of the conversion would involve the installation of a new floor to create largely open plan offices at ground and first floor. A separate application (P05/1028) has been submitted for listed building consent.
3. The existing outbuilding/cellar at the rear of the church would be carefully demolished and the area hardcore for parking.

HISTORY

4. Application No. P05/1028 is for listed building consent for refurbishment and conversion of the building to office accommodation. Pending.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5. A single letter of objection has been received from a resident of Gospel End Street who would appear to have been a member of the church before it closed. Her letter is primarily about the graveyard and possible disturbance of the graves and gravestones. She also objects to the provision of the small car park again because of its impact upon the graveyard and the setting of the church.

OTHER CONSULTATION

6. The Heads of Public Protection and Traffic and Road Safety raise no objection.
7. The Head of Bereavement Services also raises no objection provided the applicant ensures that the remaining gravestones and memorials are made safe, given that the safety of memorials is now a matter of concern nationally.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

8. Area of Special Townscape Value (Policies 39, 40 and 41)
Local Distinctiveness (Policy HE1)
Policy 44 Listed Buildings
Policy HE6 Listed Buildings

ASSESSMENT

9. The Church is a listed building. It has been vacant for some time now. The proposals would bring the building back into beneficial use with minimum alteration to the fabric. Indeed, externally, the building would change very little. The small demolition at the rear would open up for reinstatement the former Sunday School windows which were covered when the outbuilding was constructed.
10. Internally, the organ, pews and pulpit would be removed but the balcony with its ornate front would be retained. The new first floor would be located to suit the glazing bars of the large ornate windows without actually affecting them. The existing glazing would be retained.
11. So far as the graveyard is concerned, the alteration would be minimal with only two head stones and two tombs being relocated to positions to be agreed with the church trustees. This would allow a small car park for seven cars to be provided at the rear of the building. The remainder of the graves and the trees would remain as they are.
12. There would be no policy objection to an office use and the retention of the church building would maintain the quality of the Area of Special Townscape Value based upon the nearby Sedgley town centre.
13. So far as the objection is concerned, these proposals would ensure that the church, an attractive and prominent listed building is retained with as little alteration as possible. Other parties have looked at the property with a view to residential conversion but these proposals have not been progressed. If the building is not brought back into use soon, it will deteriorate further and may require demolition.

CONCLUSION

14. The proposed conversion of this listed building to offices represents an acceptable use of the building which is currently vacant and receiving little maintenance. Only one objection has been received which is not substantiated as there would be the absolute minimum of disruption or alteration of the building itself or the grounds. At the same

time, the changes that are proposed are deemed necessary to ensure the project is viable. Listed building consent will also be required before any works can be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION

16. It is recommended that the application is approved subject to the following conditions:-

Conditions and/or reasons:

1. A05A Commencement within 3 years - Full
2. Before the use hereby approved is commenced, the memorials in the graveyard shall be inspected and documented and any dangerous or dilapidated memorial made safe.
3. The car park shall be laid out in accordance with the notation on the approved site plan (drawing No. 003/4058/06) before the use hereby approved is commenced.