

# PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER: P05/1028

Type of approval sought	LISTED BUILDING CONSENT
Ward	SEDGLEY
Applicant	MR DESMOND P O'NEILL
Location:	<b>TIPTON STREET METHODIST CHURCH, TIPTON STREET, DUDLEY, DY3 1HE</b>
Proposal:	<b>LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR REFURBISHMENT AND CONVERSION OF THE BUILDING TO OFFICE ACCOMMODATION WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING, NECESSITATING THE REMOVAL OF REAR EXTENSION, PEWS, PULPIT, ORGAN, STAIRCASES AND THE RELOCATION OF TWO HEADSTONES AND TWO TOMBS WITHIN THE GRAVEYARD.</b>
Recommendation summary:	<b>APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS</b>

## SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. The site comprises the Methodist Church and graveyard which occupies a prominent position at the junction of Tipton Street and Turls Street, Sedgley, just outside the All Saints Conservation Area. Adjoining the site on its north-western boundary is a vacant site (formerly a builder's yard) which currently has planning approval for residential development. To the east of the site is a residential property in Turls Street. The site to which this application relates has an existing vehicular and pedestrian access from Tipton Street.

## PROPOSAL

2. It is proposed to convert the church to offices. Internally the conversion would involve the installation of a suspended floor to create largely open plan offices at ground and first floor level, the insertion of toilets and the replacement of two narrow substandard staircases with a single new staircase.
3. Externally, a comparatively modern, single storey, lean-to extension is to be demolished at the rear and the church wall made good. All other existing elements of the facades are to be retained and conserved or restored.

4. The application proposes the creation of a small parking facility for seven cars on the edge of the graveyard. To achieve this it is proposed to relocate two gravestones and two tombs elsewhere within the burial ground. It is not proposed to disturb the burials that these relate to. The surface of the ground will be reduced by no more than 300 mm to accommodate hardcore and a natural stone aggregate surface that will be contained within a blue brick edging.

## HISTORY

5. Planning application No P05/1029 for the change of use and conversion of the church to offices and creation of car park in the graveyard area was granted approval on 18 October 2005 with conditions.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

6. Details of this application have been advertised in the press and at the site for the statutory period.
7. Three letters of objection have been received from the public.
8. A local resident of Gospel End Street, Sedgley, raises objections to the change of use (which has already been dealt with by approved planning application No P05/1029) the provision of parking spaces within the graveyard and the repositioning of memorials within the church. The proposals have now been revised to ensure that all memorials within the church will remain insitu and be visible. This resident calls for the church to be preserved "simply as it is."
9. A local resident of Ferndown Avenue Sedgley, raises objections on the grounds of the alterations to the interior and to the burial ground and refers to the fact that there are vacant offices elsewhere in Sedgley.
10. A resident of Hampton in Middlesex claims that he has ancestors buried in the graveyard and raises objections to the graveyard being tarmaced over to provide parking facilities. Whilst he objects to a hard standing being laid over burials he would not be opposed to exhumation and appropriate reburial.

## OTHER CONSULTATIONS

11. English Heritage and the five amenity societies were consulted in respect of this application. Responses were received from English Heritage, the Ancient Monuments Society and the Council for British Archaeology. None of the respondents were opposed to the conversion of the building in principal, but all offered advice as to how the interior proposals could be amended to improve the spatial qualities and the level of retention of historic fabric, fixtures and fittings.
12. The applicant and his architect have readily taken on board all of these observations and, working closely with your conservation officers and English Heritages' Inspector of Historic Buildings, have amended the proposals to address the majority of issues raised. Letters have been sent to the amenity societies advising them of the changes to the proposals initiated in response to their observations. English Heritage has confirmed that they have no objections to the amended plans.

## RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

13. Local Distinctiveness (Policy HE1)  
Policy HE6 Listed Buildings.

## ASSESSMENT

14. The church was added to the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest as a grade II structure in 1999. It has remained unoccupied since before this date. It does not appear to be receiving regular maintenance and is now displaying signs of vandalism and physical deterioration of fabric both internally and externally.
15. The demolition of the inappropriate rear extension will permit the reinstatement of the former Sunday School windows thus restoring the exterior of the building to its original form.
16. The issues raised by statutory consultees and private objectors over loss of fabric and fittings to the interior of the church has been taken very seriously by the applicant who has initiated considerable revisions to the proposals in order to ameliorate the

situation. The scheme will now ensure the retention of wainscot panelling, the pulpit, the altar rail, the glazed and boarded entrance screens, a representative example of the pews, the decorative balcony front, all internal commemorative plaques and tablets and all stained and commemorative glass. The organ is being retained by the Methodists and moved to another site for reuse.

17. There is no space within the site at the front of the church to accommodate car parking. Off-site roadside parking at this point is prohibited. The on-site driveway alongside the church cannot accommodate parking as it is the only means of access to the church hall at the rear which has been retained and is used by the church authorities. The creation of a small parking area on the graveyard was therefore the only option available to the applicant. Whilst three members of the public and the Council for British Archaeology have objected to this issue, the minimalistic proposal in relation to the burial ground has met with the approval of English Heritage, the Ancient Monument Society, The Trustees of the Church and the Methodist Property Division.

## CONCLUSION

18. The proposed conversion of this listed church to office accommodation represents an acceptable use of the building, which, after remaining unoccupied for at least six years, is showing marked signs of deterioration as a result of vandalism, lack of maintenance, heating and ventilation. The changes to the interior of the building that are proposed in the amended application are deemed to be the very minimum necessary to ensure that the project is commercially viable. Apart from the demolition of an inappropriate rear extension, the only change to the exterior of the Church will be that it is reinstated to its original architectural form, conserved and restored, thus safeguarding the appearance and future of this locally important grade II listed building and its setting.

## RECOMMENDATION

19. It is recommended that the application is approved subject to conditions.

**Conditions and/or reasons:**

1. K01A Commencement within 3 years
2. K06A Restoration of damage
3. Only alterations and demolition detailed and specified in this application will be permitted. All other existing fabric, fixtures and fittings of the Listed Building, both externally and internally, shall be afforded adequate protection against damage or unauthorised removal at all times throughout the construction process.
4. Notwithstanding the submitted plans and drawings, full details of the following matters shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to development commencing:
  - a) The design and construction of the new internal partitions,
  - b) The relationship of the new first floor construction against the window apertures.
  - c) The constructional relationship between the new first floor and the existing gallery frontage.
  - d) The relocation of the part glazed lobby screen within the new entrance foyer.
  - e) The repositioning of the pews, pulpit and altar rail within the church.
  - f) The source, type, colour and component size of all materials to be used to form the parking area.
  - g) The source, type, colour, component size and tooling of all materials to be used in the external restoration of the building.
  - h) The relocation within the burial ground of the two gravestones and the two tombs.
5. No work to the Listed Building involving ground disturbance, demolition or alteration shall begin until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a scheme of investigation which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.