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Item No 06:-

16/02592/FUL (CD.9183/A)

**Guiting Power Baptist Church
Guiting Power
Gloucestershire
GL54 5UX**

Item No 06:-**Conversion of Baptist Church into a dwelling at Guiting Power Baptist Church
Guiting Power Gloucestershire GL54 5UX**

Full Application 16/02592/FUL (CD.9183/A)	
Applicant:	KNA (Cotswolds) Ltd
Agent:	Verity & Beverley Ltd
Case Officer:	Joe Seymour
Ward Member(s):	Councillor Richard Keeling
Committee Date:	9th November 2016
RECOMMENDATION:	PERMIT

Main Issues:

- (a) Principle of Development
- (b) Impact on the Historic Environment
- (c) Parking/ Highway Safety
- (d) Residential Amenity

Reasons for Referral:

The Ward Member Cllr Richard Keeling has referred this application to be determined by the Planning Committee because the concerns over parking raised by the Parish Council and others.

1. Site Description:

The site consists of a Baptist church which is located in a prominent position within the village of Guiting Power. The church was constructed in 1835 and was built in local stone with a blue slate roof, set within coped verges. It is typically quite restrained in architectural style, with large arched windows containing leaded lights. A Venetian window is set up within the principal entrance elevation, with a fanlight over the doors below. All are set within ashlar stone surrounds with projecting keystone detailing.

Within the coped front wall is a historic set of wrought iron gates. The side and rear boundary walls are rougher local dry stone with cock-and-hen capping. To the rear is a school room extension (1890) and a further addition projecting to the side (1905), both gabled in form, with a small flat roof stone porch in the front corner. The church is surrounded by a burial ground, with the main graveyard area to the rear.

Inside the pews have been removed (apparently these were not original, but a more standard type dating to 1905). A raised pulpit is still present. The aisles are stone flagged, but the slightly raised pew areas timber boarded. A gallery is set at the west end, with original timber access stairs and original pews. Its floor is raked. The stair linings and a screen added below the balcony to form a lobby area, date to the late 20th century. The dado height boarded wall linings would seem to date to this period as well. The wall linings, and ceiling lining, within the school room addition are bead-and-butt and may be older. The ceiling within the main chapel is barrel vaulted, with a simple cornice and quite an unusually decorative large ceiling rose.

2. Relevant Planning History:

None.

3. Planning Policies:

LPR46 Privacy & Gardens in Residential Deve
 NPPF National Planning Policy Framework
 LPR15 Conservation Areas
 LPR19 Develop outside Development Boundaries
 LPR28 Conversion of Rural Buildings
 LPR32 Community Facilities
 LPR38 Accessibility to & within New Develop
 LPR39 Parking Provision
 LPR42 Cotswold Design Code
 LPR45 Landscaping in New Development

4. Observations of Consultees:

Conservation Officer: No objection - comments incorporated into the Officer's Assessment.

Environment Agency: No objection.

Environmental Protection Officer: No objection.

Senior Technical Pollution Officer: No objection.

5. Views of Parish Council:

Guiting Power Parish Council wish to object to this planning application on the grounds of lack of vehicular access and parking. The lack of this amenity for this dwelling would result in increased parking congestion on the busy narrow road. This property is situated near the brow of a hill, so the resulting parking would; the Parish Council believe result in a Highways safety issue and could increase the likelihood of accidents occurring.

6. Other Representations:

Two local residents have objected to the proposal for the following reasons:

- Lack of parking and vehicular access/ highway safety
- Loss of a community facility

7. Applicant's Supporting Information:

Statement of Significance and Heritage Statement
 Planning Statement

8. Officer's Assessment:**(a) Principle of Development**

The Baptist Church is considered to be a community facility according to Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 32 and proposals for development which would result in their loss where there remains a recognised need are not supported by this policy unless an equivalent alternative facility is provided. No alternative facility is being offered as part of this application, however Guiting Power still benefits from regular church services at St Michael's and All Angels Church within the village as an alternative place of worship. Also, Guiting Power Village Hall is still used for functions and is located next to the St Michael's Church. No regular services are held at the Baptist Church so there is considered not to be a recognised need for two Christian places of worship in the village; St Michael's Church provides an adequate alternative.

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets; or
- where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.

It is considered that the Baptist Church is a building which conforms to the Policy described above. As a Grade II listed building it is a designated heritage asset and its conversion into a dwelling is an appropriate way of securing its future and avoiding its loss altogether. The Baptist Church has been redundant for some time and its conversion could potentially lead to an enhancement of its setting, subject to specific details regarding the proposed conversion methods, which will be assessed in section (b) below. Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 28 is also supportive of the conversion of rural buildings in order to preserve their age and significance and the Baptist Church is considered to be a prime candidate, not only because of its listed status but because it is considered to be structurally sound and capable of conversion.

Although Policy 28 outlines its preference for conversions to business uses over residential conversions, it is considered that a residential conversion would generate less vehicle journeys per day compared to the daily commutes associated with a business use that would inevitably be completed with private cars to a rural village with limited public transport links. Hence, a residential conversion is, in the opinion of Officers, a more sustainable form of development than a conversion for business purposes, notwithstanding the content of Policy 28.

The other benefit of a residential conversion is that less of the original character of the building would be eroded because it would avoid the need for potentially harmful paraphernalia such as signage for advertisement and health and safety purposes and visitors parking areas. The issue of parking and highway safety is assessed in more detail in section (c) below.

For these reasons, the principle of the proposed conversion of the Grade II listed Baptist Church into a dwelling is considered to be sound and in accordance with the guidance contained within Local Plan Policies 28 and 32 and NPPF paragraph 55.

(b) Impact on the Historic Environment

Externally, relatively few alterations are proposed. Existing doors and windows will be retained and repaired, with the exception of the two windows to the rear of the school room. Adequate ventilation and number of opening lights should be considered as much of the historic glazing is direct fixed leaded lights. The alteration of these into a set of French doors and a two-light window is proposed, which is supported. Previously two French doors were proposed but this was revised at the request of the Conservation Officer. These doors are shown opening on to a proposed set of stone steps to the remaining doors leading down to a small flagged area. This replaces a decking area which was omitted from the scheme as it was considered too domestic and intrusive in appearance.

Elsewhere, new gates are introduced (the existing 19th century gates should be annotated as retained, as they are not shown on the existing or proposed site plans). New evergreen (yew) hedging will delineate a new pathway to a separate retained memorial garden, to which the gravestones will be re-located. It is always regrettable to remove gravestones from their historic context. This will detract from the historic interest of the site, as well as visually from the setting of the listed church. The gravestones are curtilage listed structures. They will be retained, but not in situ. There will be notable harm to their significance. But this is another aspect of achieving a practicable conversion, and with the proposed re-siting to the memorial garden, this is accepted.

The other notable works externally include alterations to a lean-to to the side of the school room. This structure is in poor condition and has been re-roofed in corrugated asbestos. It was formerly

privies. The proposal is, quite appropriately, to make use of it as an en-suite shower room. The main impact of this comes in the form of raising its roof to gain adequate head room. To alter the form and proportions of an historic element of the building is normally not acceptable. But given the lesser significance of this element and the justification in forming habitable accommodation, this is accepted, as the structure will still be tucked under the eaves above. Stonework will match the existing up to similar verge and eaves treatments, and there will be the enhancement of a new slate roof.

There is also a new flue proposed. This replaces a previous flue to a heater set amongst the pews. The flue is set to the less sensitive roof slope and is accepted in its height, subject to a matte black finish.

(c) Parking/ Highway Safety

Concerns have been raised with regard to parking and highway safety. Due to the historic use of the site as a church and graveyard it is not feasible to create an off-street parking area within the confines of the site without significantly harming the historic fabric of the building or disturbing the deceased that are buried within the grounds of the church.

Cars are commonly parked on the verge of the unnamed road running through the village and whilst this may cause other road users to slow down, in a rural village context and on an unclassified highway this is not necessarily an issue. Section (a) of this report above explained the reasons why a residential conversion of the building was preferred to a conversion for a business use. One of the reasons is that both traffic generation and parking provision would be less. The same principle is applicable when the building's existing use as a place of worship is compared to the proposed residential use. The existing use of the site as a church would generate the need for more parking spaces if a full congregation was attending a service, compared to a private residential use where perhaps two cars would be used by potential occupants.

The existing use of the building is a church, but more specifically in terms of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) it is a D1 (non-residential institutions) use. The D1 use class also covers uses such as health centres, museums, public libraries and schools. All of these uses would require a greater amount of parking spaces and would all result in a higher number of car journeys compared to the proposed use as a private dwelling. The ability for the use of the building to be changed within the D1 use class without the need for planning permission is a genuine fallback position and a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

A Ministerial Statement made as an addendum to the NPPF with regard to parking standards was made in March 2015. It states that parking standards are covered in paragraph 39 of the NPPF, which in turn states that for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account the accessibility of the development and the type, mix and use of development. The following text now needs to be read alongside NPPF paragraph 39: "Local Planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network". Further to this guidance, NPPF paragraph 32 says that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

It is considered that the proposed residential use creates a net decrease in the amount of parking required compared to its existing use as a church and the other D1 uses for which it could potentially be used. A private dwelling represents the best use for the building in terms of minimising on-street parking and traffic generation. For this reason, there is considered not to be a significant highway safety or parking issue relating to the proposed residential conversion.

(d) Residential Amenity

No significant extensions or enlargements are proposed as part of the residential conversion that would pose a threat to surrounding neighbouring properties.

The proposal involves moving the headstones from immediately behind the building and repositioning them at the north-east end of the site to create a memorial garden so people can still pay their respects to those buried at the church. The relocation of the headstones would create space for a private garden for the dwelling which would measure approximately 11m x 11m. This is considered to be a sufficiently large garden for a two-bed dwelling according to the guidance outlined in Local Plan Policy 46.

9. Conclusion:

The principle of converting a historic Grade II listed church into a dwelling is supported by both local and national planning policies. The proposed re-use of the building would help to prolong its life and sustain its significance as a designated heritage asset. The method of the proposed conversion is supported by the Council's Conservation Officer as it would involve the retention and greater revealing of the building's historic fabric. There are considered to be no significant parking or highway safety issues and the proposal would also retain residential amenity with neighbouring residents. For these reasons, the proposal is recommended for approval pursuant to the guidance contained within Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15, 19, 28, 32, 38, 39, 42, 45, 46 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. Proposed conditions:

The development shall be started by 3 years from the date of this decision notice.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The development hereby approved shall be implemented in accordance with the following drawing numbers: 16.1368/00, 16.1368/05 A, 16.1368/06 A, 16.1368/07 A and 16.1368/08 A.

Reason: For purposes of clarity and for the avoidance of doubt, in accordance with paragraphs 203 and 206 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

No works to the building shall take place until the applicants or their agents and successors in title, have agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority a programme of architectural recording of the building, the features within it, and the structures within the site. This work shall be carried out to a standard recognised by Historic England and agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to preserve a record of and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets or features to be lost or altered, and to make this evidence publicly accessible in accordance with Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

No gravestones shall be removed or re-located until they have been recorded in full, to a standard agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, and their existing and proposed locations submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall only be carried out exactly as agreed.

Reason: In order to preserve a record of and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets or features to be lost or altered, and to make this evidence publicly accessible in accordance with Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Prior to the construction of any roof of the development hereby approved, samples of the proposed roofing materials shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and only the approved materials shall be used.

Reason: To ensure that, in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42, the development will be constructed of materials of a type, colour, texture and quality that will be appropriate to the site and its surroundings.

New stonework shall be of the same stone type, colour and sizes as the existing stonework and it shall be laid using a mortar which is slightly weaker than the stone and which contains well graded sharp sand, stone dust and lime. In addition, the pointing shall have a marginally recessed finish and shall be brushed or bagged and shall match the existing.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.

All door and window frames shall be recessed a minimum of 75mm into the external walls of the building.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.

The external joinery shall be painted in a colour to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.

New rainwater goods shall be of cast iron construction or a substitute which has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.

The flue shall be painted matte black and shall be maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.

The new rooflights shall be of a design which, when installed, shall not project forward of the roof slope in which they are located.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.

All fencing, walling, surfacing and hedging shown on the drawings shall be carried out prior to the development being brought into use or in accordance with an implementation programme first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the hard landscaping is carried out and thereby achieves the objective of Cotswold District Local Plan Policy 45.

None of the following shall be installed in the development hereby approved until their design have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

Verge and eaves of raised roof, French doors, window, boarding, glass balustrade to balcony, new internal doors, architraves, new boarding within screens, raised floors and investigation of area in front of pulpit, extract vent locations and terminals, soil vent pipe routes and terminals, any boiler flue location and terminal, rooflights, any new external lighting and gates.

The design and details shall be accompanied by drawings to a minimum scale of 1:5 with full size moulding cross section profiles, elevations and sections. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details and retained as such at all times.

Reason: To ensure the development is completed in a manner sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies 15 and 42.