



PLANNING
DESIGN & ACCESS
STATEMENT

**Proposed Change of Use of Existing Methodist Church Hall to 3
(No.) Residential Dwellinghouses**

Methodist Church Hall, Lowford

JUNE 2023

1. THE APPLICATION SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 1.1 The application site is located on the east side of School Lane and the south side of Spring Grove which is an unsaved road leading to a small group of dwellings.
- 1.2 Development to the north is mainly associated with the mixed uses relating to the main centre of Lowford which includes retail, hot food, business and community uses. To the south of the site the character is principally residential.
- 1.3 The site extends to an area of 0.057ha with 0.024ha being the footprint of the building. Access is at the northwest corner of the site leading to a hard standing/parking area to the front of the building with an area of 0.013ha.

2. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (NPPF)

- 2.1 National planning guidance and policy is provided through the National Planning Policy Framework. Which was amended and updated in July 2021. This provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development and urges Local Planning Authorities to permit development that accords with up to date local planning policy without delay.
- 2.2 Para. 8 of the NPPF refers to the three principle roles of sustainable development:

“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently,

minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

- 2.3 Para.69 emphasises the importance of small and medium sites for housing, especially ‘windfall’ site:

“Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:

c) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions– giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”

- 2.4 Para.119 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.”

- 2.5 Amongst other matters para.120 states that planning decisions should:

“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)”

- 2.6 Para.123 adds:

“Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to:

a) use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework; and

b) make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the quality of provision and access to open space.”

3. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

3.1 The relevant policies in this case are:

Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016 – 2036

- 3.2 The Plan estimates that 14580 dwellings will be required over the Plan period.
- 3.3 Strategic Policy S1 – delivering sustainable development
- 3.4 Strategic Policy S2 – Approach to new development – encourages sustainable development within the ‘urban edge’.
- 3.5 Strategic Policy S3 – Location of New Housing – confirms that as much development as possible will be focussed within the existing urban areas.
- 3.6 Policy DM1 – General criteria for new development
- 3.7 Policy DM2 – Environmentally Sustainable Development – seeks achievement of reduced carbon emissions.
- 3.8 Policy DM14 – Parking – requires parking provision in accordance with the Council’s Parking Standards SPD
- 3.9 Policy DM23 – Residential development in urban areas – Generally permissive of new development involving the conversion of existing buildings.

Residential Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

3.10 The document was adopted in January 2009.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 F/20/87453 - Conversion of former Methodist Church Hall to 6no. residential apartments (comprising of 4no. studio and 2no. 1-bedroom apartments) with associated parking and amenity space, elevational alterations, rooflights and raised decked areas – Withdrawn 3 June 2020.
- 4.2 F/21/89869 - Conversion of former Methodist church hall to 3no. 2 bedroom dwellings, with associated parking and construction of garage, amenity space, elevational alterations including insertion of rooflights, and provision of raised decked areas Refused 21/02/2023 for the following reasons:

1 Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the existing building could not be used for an alternative less vulnerable flood risk use or community use. Furthermore, the flood risk assessment fails to demonstrate that the development will be safe

from flooding. As such the development is contrary to Policies DM5 & DM36 and provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework.

2 The proposed development fails to provide suitable and accessible on site car parking spaces, which would encourage the parking of vehicles on the public highway and so interrupt the free flow of traffic and cause a hazard to road users. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy DM14 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan, Provisions within The National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's Residential Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document.

3 Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed development will not have an adverse effect on bats. The proposal is therefore contrary to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Policy DM11 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan and provisions within The National Planning Policy Framework.

4 The application fails to provide for the required mitigation to offset the impacts of the development on the European protected sites (i.e. Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area & Ramsar Site, Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation & New Forest Special Protection Area, Ramsar & Special Area of Conservation) from nutrient loading and recreational disturbance generated by the population increase resulting from the development. The application is therefore contrary to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); policies S1, DM10 and DM11 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036) and provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. PLANNING STATEMENT

- 5.1 For the purposes of this statement it is assumed that the proposed development meets all of the Planning Authority requirements with the exception of the matters raised in the reasons for refusal as set out above. The following therefore refers only to how this revised proposal may be considered to meet those concerns or why the applicant considers that a particular element should be revisited and reconsidered by the Authority.

How the revised Proposals Address the Previous Reasons for Refusal

Alternative Use Flood Risk

- 5.2 The last official planning use of the site was for a Church Hall and Nursery. Although the building has not been used for this purpose for more than 10 years, no official change of use has been sought so that any fallback use would be of this type.
- 5.3 Appendix 3 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification. Residential properties are placed within the 'More Vulnerable' category but so also are Children's Nurseries:

“More vulnerable

- Hospitals
 - Residential institutions such as residential care homes, children’s homes, social services homes, prisons and hostels.
 - Buildings used for dwelling houses, student halls of residence, drinking establishments, nightclubs and hotels.
 - Non-residential uses for health services, nurseries and educational establishments.
 - Landfill* and sites used for waste management facilities for hazardous waste.
 - Sites used for holiday or short-let caravans and camping, subject to a specific warning and evacuation plan.”
- 5.4 Seeking a ‘less vulnerable’ to flooding, community use, for the building is therefore considered to be a wholly unachievable and unacceptable requirement, since, to a significant extent, these uses are all categorised as being as similarly vulnerable as residential.
- 5.5 If the Council is only referring to its Policy regarding the loss of community uses, then it is quite simply the case that such a use could not be relied upon at this site since, although the community use is currently the official fall back, it must be accepted that the use has not taken place for many years and ceased because of lack of community support.

Safety from Flooding

- 5.6 An update to the submitted Flood Risk Assessment is provided with this application to address this particular issue. Additionally, the LPA is requested to consider the first section of the reason for refusal which fails to appreciate that the fall-back use promoted by the Council would be as equally vulnerable to flooding as the proposed residential use and would not benefit from mitigation measures.
- 5.7 The proposed development offers an opportunity to introduce flood risk mitigation measures which cannot be required for this fallback use.

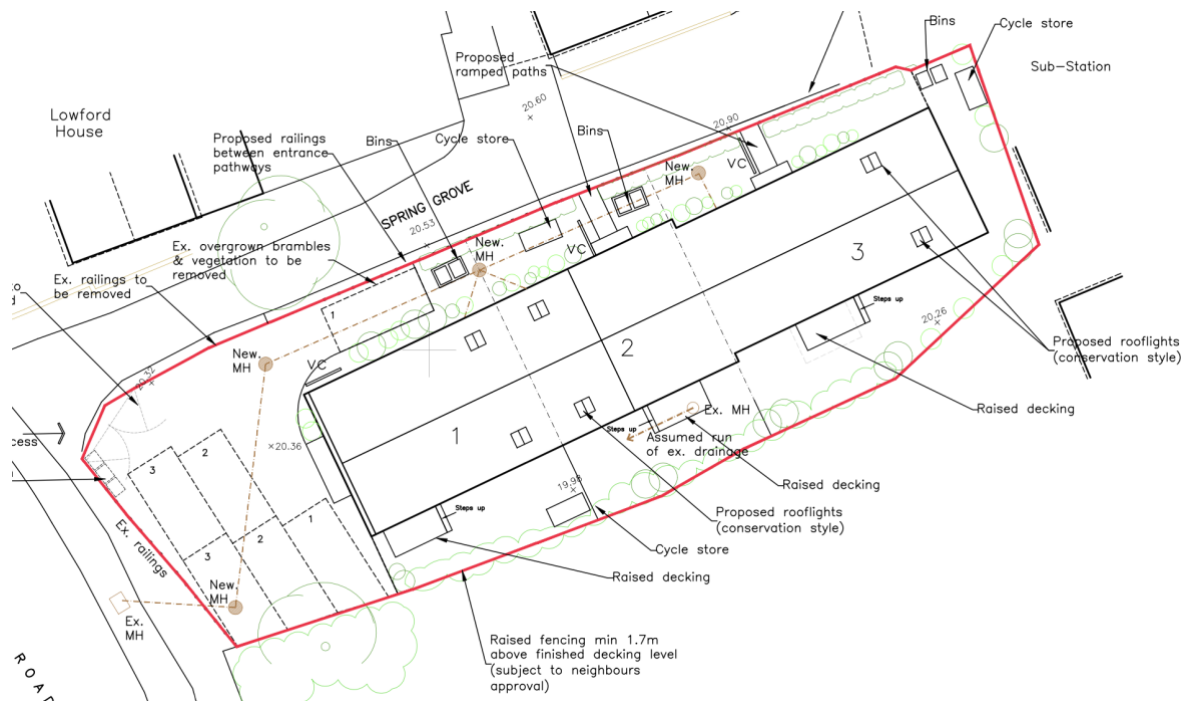
Car Parking Layout

- 5.8 The applicants are not clear as to why the LPA objected to the previously submitted car parking layout since their own adopted car parking standards are met:

Table of Residential Parking Standards 2009

Property Size	Car Ownership		Car Parking Standard			Long Term Cycle Storage	
	2001 (Census)	2026 (TEMPRO growth)	with 50% or more unallocated spaces	with <50% unallocated spaces	Individual/ 'on-plot' allocation	Individual storage	Communal storage
	cars per household		parking spaces per dwelling				
GENERAL RESIDENTIAL							
1 bed	0.96	1.00	1.00	1.25	2	1	1
2/3 bed	1.37	1.44	1.50	1.75	2	2	1

- 5.9 Nonetheless, the proposed development has been altered to show an alternative parking arrangement with all of the car parking accessed from the existing access point at the junction of School Lane and Spring Grove.



- 5.10 A supporting Technical Note is provided as part of the planning application with vehicle swept paths.

Bats

- 5.11 The appellant was particularly aggrieved by this reason for refusal of the last submission. It is understood that the reason was based upon the opinion by the Council that the revised report (3rd October 2021) was no longer valid at the time of refusal, resulting, apparently, in the need for a further survey to be carried out. The LPA is requested to note that the Ecology consultee response was not uploaded on to the Council's website until 18th December 2022 – 14 months after the submission of the final report, already being v.4.

- 5.12 The 'insufficient information' referred to in the reason for refusal is understood to relate to the Council's view that the report would require yet another update due to the elapse of time. However, the elapse of time was wholly due to delays in the determination of the application by the Council which was made on 21 February 2023. Further, in the Council's ecologist response (copy supplied) it states:

As bats are known to move between different roosts, bat survey reports are valid for anywhere between 12 and 18 months, usually depending on the bat roost potential of the buildings. If this application were to proceed, an update survey would be required before determination, as the latest survey results from September 2021 are now more than 24 months old.

The comment was made on 7th December 2022 but states that the report is invalid because it is 'more than 24 months old', which, at the time, it clearly was not by more than 10 months.

- 5.13 It is considered that the mitigation measures required relating to bats will not change significantly over time and which are set out as follows under chapter 5 of the report:

"5.1 The proposal is to internally convert the church into flats.

5.2 The slates required to be removed for the dormer windows and the rooflights will be done so under ecological supervision after a toolbox talk has been given. The toolbox talk must be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to any works on site to highlight locations with bat potential and the required working practices regarding these or near to them.

5.3 Any new external lighting must be avoided wherever possible. Where it is necessary, it should be pointed downwards and away from any trees and buildings in the vicinity of the site.

5.4 Two new bat roosting crevice features will be incorporated into the proposals under the eaves facing south, see Appendix E.

5.5 The site will be monitored during construction to ensure bat features are installed correctly.

5.6 At least 20m of new planting will take place along the northern side of the site to create a new low hedge using privet or box, with native bulbs planted at the base at a density of 10-20 per m2. '

- 5.14 An updated statement is provided from the applicant's ecological consultant but it is suggested that a further survey, involving significant additional time and cost is not necessary in this case.

Recreational Disturbance and Nutrient Neutrality

- 5.15 These are matters concerning which the applicant is fully aware and will be addressed should the Council be minded to recommend planning permission in this case.

Layout and Design

- 5.16 The proposed layout has been altered to accommodate the proposed changes to the car parking layout.
- 5.17 This has further resulted the deletion of the proposed extension shown on the previous application.
- 5.18 The change in the design is not considered to be material other than it retains more of the original form of the building.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposal is for the conversion of an underused building within the built up area of Lowford.
- 6.2 The site is in a sustainable location.
- 6.3 The Conversion will be carried out in a manner sensitive to the established character of the building and that will enhance its appearance within the immediate locality.
- 6.4 The development will contribute to the achievement of small housing within the locality and will make better use of this otherwise underused building.
- 6.5 Adequate car parking can be provided on site.
- 6.6 The development has been designed to mitigate against the flood risk at the site and any other requirements of the FRA will be implemented.
- 6.7 The alterations shown from the previous refusal are considered to overcome the original concerns.
- 6.8 For all of the above reasons, the Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission in this case.