



PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**Proposed Change of Use of Existing Methodist Church Hall
Residential Dwellinghouses & Extension to form Single Garage**

Methodist Church Hall, Lowford

AUGUST 2024

PREAMBLE

This application is submitted following the refusal of the same development under reference F/21/89869 on 21 February 2023 (2 years after submission).

The reasons for refusal were:

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 impact 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.

Whilst a submitted Appeal was dismissed the Inspector noted that:

Within the appeal documentation, further information confirming the minimum proposed ground floor level and additional bat survey results in response to the reasons for refusal on the decision notice has been provided. As a result, the Council have withdrawn the reasons for refusal relating to flood risk and the effect of the proposed development on bats.

Consequently, the main issues are:

1. *whether the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA1 and New Forest SPA and SAC2, with particular regard to recreational activity;*
2. *whether the development would be likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA, with particular regard to nutrient neutrality; and*
3. *the effect of the proposed parking arrangement on the safety of users of Spring Grove.*

Up to date information regarding Flood Risk and Bats will be provided with this latest application, nonetheless these matters are clearly resolvable.

On the matter of car parking and road safety along Spring Grove the Inspector concluded:

I conclude that the proposed parking arrangement would not harm the safety of users of Spring Grove, in accordance with Policy DM14 of the Local Plan. This requires, amongst other aspects, new residential development to provide off-highway parking which is adequate in terms of highway safety and traffic management. Additionally, the proposed parking complies with the standards set out in the Parking SPD. It also accords with Chapter 9 of the Framework which seeks to ensure development provides safe and suitable access to the site for all users.

All other objections to the proposal with the exception of items 1 and 2 above were set aside by the Inspector. Therefore, there remain NO unresolvable on site planning objections to the proposed development.

The following is the Design and Access Statement as submitted with the original 2021 Planning Application with adjustments as necessary to the current situation.

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 December 2023. 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 well-designed, beautiful and safe places, 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 protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving 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.70 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.123 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.124 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.127 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 Local Planning Policy is provided by the **Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036**. The relevant policies in this case are:

3.2

3.3 The Plan estimates that 14580 dwellings will be required over the Plan period.

3.4 Strategic Policy S1 – delivering sustainable development

3.5 Strategic Policy S2 – Approach to new development – encourages sustainable development within the ‘urban edge’ and allows for 1475 ‘windfall’ dwellings.

3.6 Strategic Policy S3 – Location of New Housing – confirms that as much development as possible will be focussed within the existing urban areas.

3.7 Policy DM1 – General criteria for new development

3.8 Policy DM2 – Environmentally Sustainable Development – seeks achievement of reduced carbon emissions.

Policy DM11 – Nature Conservation

Policy DM13 – General Development Criteria - Transport

3.9 Policy DM14 – Parking – requires parking provision in accordance with the Council’s Parking Standards SPD

3.10 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)

3.14 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 February 2023 – Limited refusal (as referred to in this statement) 30/04/24

- 4.3 F/23/95510 - Conversion of Methodist church hall to 3no. 2 bedroom dwellings, with associated parking, amenity space, elevational alterations including insertion of rooflights and provision of raised decked areas n-
Refused 08/12/23

5. PLANNING STATEMENT

Principle

Use

- 5.1 The site is located within the settlement boundary of Lowford. The original use of the building for a church hall and nursery under Class D1 of the Use Classes order (now Classes E(f) and F1(f)). This use has not been operational for at least 9 years during which time the building has been used for storage.
- 5.2 This was confirmed by the Inspector in paragraph 21 of the appeal decision:
- “Although at the time of my site visit it was clear that the building had not been in use for some time, the evidence before me indicates that the last operational use was as a church hall and nursery.”*
- 5.3 No reason for refusal on the appealed decision referred to the principle of the change of use of the building from ‘church hall/nursery’ to residential so that it must be taken that the Council have no objection to the principle of the use.

Other Matters of Principle

Design

- 5.4 The building is an established feature of the street scene so that conversion is considered to be an appropriate route rather than redevelopment in this case in order to maintain the character of the area.



5.6 No objections were raised by the Council, in terms of the refused/appealed proposal, with respect to the design of the conversion

5.7 The Inspector affirmed:

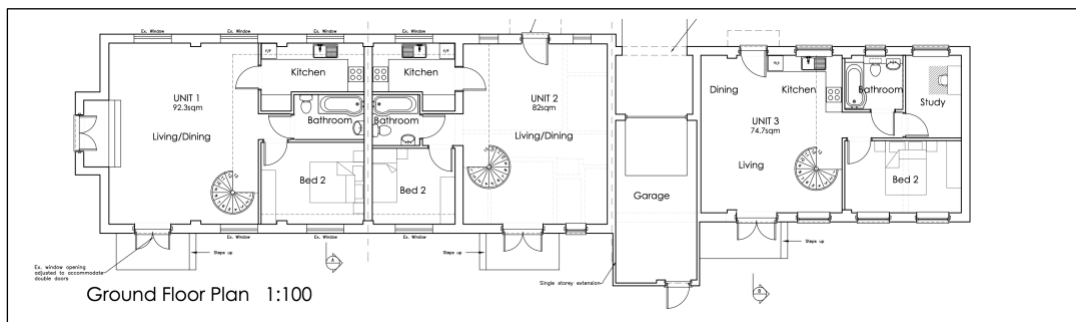
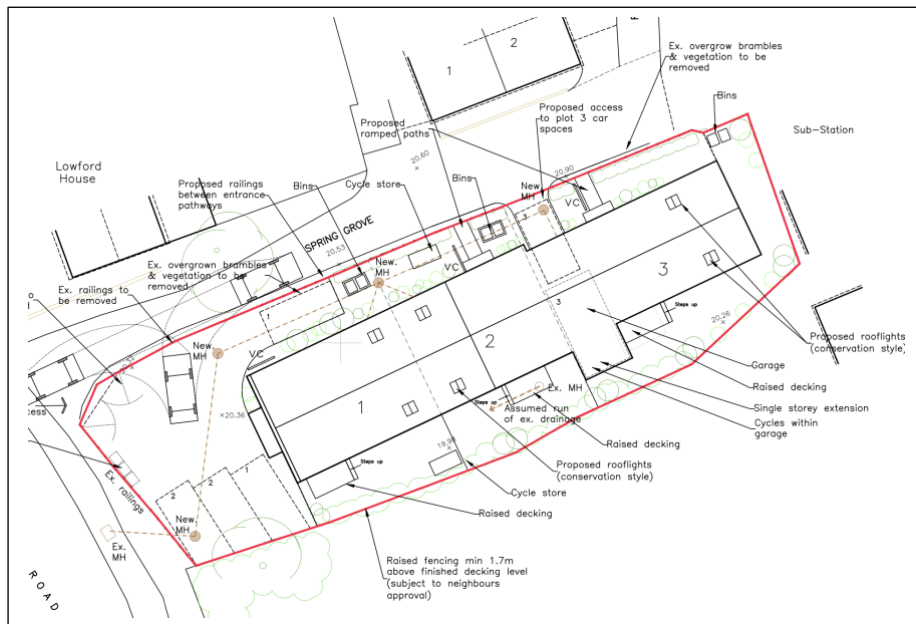
“It will also bring back into use a vacant building currently in poor condition the target of vandalism, enhancing the appearance of the building and its immediate surroundings. I acknowledge the support of the scheme by some members of the local community in this respect. Whilst these benefits would be limited due to the scale of the development, nevertheless they weigh considerably in favour of the appeal scheme.”

Layout, Access and Parking

5.8 The Officer’s previous concerns have been taken wholly on board with the development now comprising just 3 independent dwellinghouses each with private garden with the exception of parking, which includes proposed garage, parking and access to Unit 3 from Spring Grove.

- 5.9 The Appeal Inspector explored the matter of parking and access in depth and concluded:

“that the proposed parking arrangement would not harm the safety of users of Spring Grove, in accordance with Policy DM14 of the Local Plan. This requires, amongst other aspects, new residential development to provide off-highway parking which is adequate in terms of highway safety and traffic management. Additionally, the proposed parking complies with the standards set out in the Parking SPD. It also accords with Chapter 9 of the Framework which seeks to ensure development provides safe and suitable access to the site for all users.”



Access

- 5.10 The existing access would be retained and widened at the northwest corner of the site at the junction of Spring Grove with School Road. The existing hardstanding area to the School Road frontage would be visually enhanced with resin bonded gravel and will accommodate 3 car parking spaces with a further space to the north side of the building all serving units 1 and 2. This will further permit turning on site. Unit 3 will have a garage with single parking space in front with access and turning on to Spring Grove. ALL AS ACCEPTED ON APPEAL.

5.11 This is in line with the Council's adopted car parking standards.

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

Unit sizes

5.12 The floor spaces of the proposed dwellings are as follows:

Unit	Beds	Floorspace (sq.m.)
1	1	92.3
2	1	82
3	1	74.7 (Garage 18)

5.13 The above floor spaces meet the national floorspace standards as set out in the **Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard – March 2015**

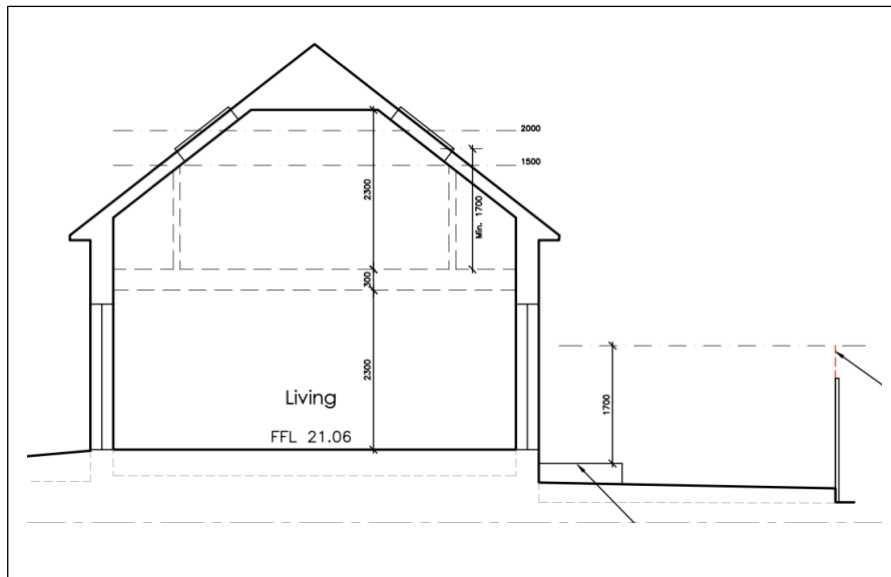
Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)					
Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

5.14 At first floor the development will involve only 6 new rooflights. On the north side these will serve ensuite bathrooms. The windows will be constructed at high level so that any outlook, particularly from the bedroom windows will be above and over the adjoining garden. The limited number of openings will reduce the 'perception' of overlooking to the adjoining property.

5.15 No issues were raised by the Council on appeal with the Inspector stating:

“The proposed development would provide social, economic and environmental benefits from the occupation of the proposed dwellings in a location with good access to services and facilities.”



Affordable Housing

- 5.19 The development for 3 dwellings is below the threshold for affordable housing provision.

Ecology

- 5.20 The site comprises an existing building with little surrounding area for wildlife to take hold. Since the development involves the use of the roofspace an updated Bat Survey has been carried out which is provided with the application. Recommendations and enhancements informed by the survey will be fully implemented.
- 5.21 The site lies within the area subject to the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy where all new residential development is considered to have a significant impact upon the importance of the nearby Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area. It is understood that the harm may be mitigated through financial contributions per dwelling towards cumulative mitigation aims and that if the Council is minded to approve the proposals it, as the Appropriate Authority, will undertake an appropriate assessment as to the level of harm and whether in this instance such financial mitigation would be appropriate. It is understood that this is generally so with the provision of new residential development which is otherwise considered to be an essential national aim.

Nutrient Neutrality

- 5.22 This application is accompanied by an updated Nutrients Budget. The Council's Nutrients Offset Scheme Team have been approached and an offer provided by email dated 20 March 2024:

“We would like to follow up your Expression of Interest for Nitrate Credits with an offer to purchase.

The cost of 2.85kg of Nitrate Mitigation Credits would be £8,550.00 plus VAT, there is also a fee for legal and administration costs of £500 plus VAT. Please note that all charges are subject to CPI with the base date of December 2022 which will be calculated and added to the cost at the point of raising our invoice.

*Please note this offer is valid for 4 months. If we do not hear from you by **20/07/2024** seeking to extend the offer period, we reserve the right to remove your project details from our records.*

Should you wish to go ahead with the purchase, please reply to this email confirming the below statements:

- . You wish to go ahead with the purchase.*
- . Confirmation from your LPA that Planning Permission has been granted.*
- . Your LPA will accept a Vesting Certificate as evidence of Nitrate Mitigation, and proof of purchase.*
- . Phosphate Mitigation is not required.*

On receiving the above confirmations, we will issue you an invoice requesting payment. Once payment has cleared, we will issue you your Vesting Certificate.

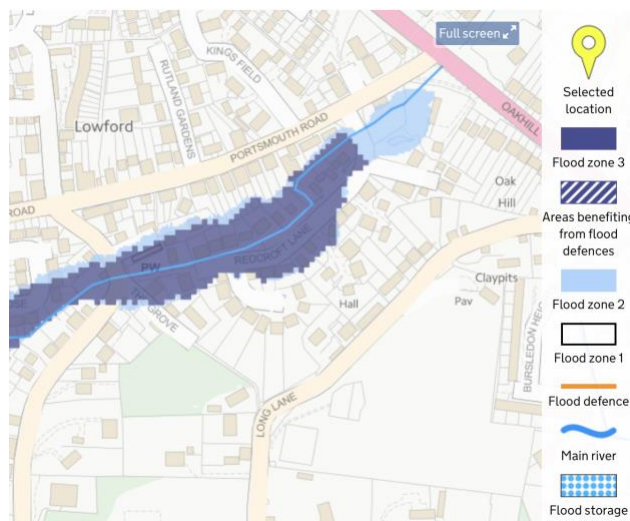
Should you require any further assistance please do get back to me.”

- 5.23 The applicant’s interest on the offer has subsequently been extended. It is expected that subject to a resolution to approve the development the Credits will be purchased accordingly and verification provided to the Planning Authority.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - Contributions

- 5.24 The Council has not yet introduced CIL.

Flooding



- 5.25 The latest FRA which was ultimately accepted by the Planning Authority and which was therefore NOT reviewed as part of the appeal process, is attached. It is hoped that this will not be challenged further through this latest application.

Contamination

- 5.26 The applicant has no knowledge of any contamination affecting the site.

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 and has been approved on appeal
- 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 All matters of Impact upon SPAs, including Nutrient Neutrality have been fully explores and can be mitigated in cooperation with the Council.
- 6.8 All other matters have been resolved and for all of the above reasons, the Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission in this case.