

Planning Statement

Conversion of unused chapel into a dwelling at Knolton Methodist Chapel, Knolton, Overton on Dee, Wrexham



Knolton Methodist Chapel

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Conversion of Knolton Methodist Chapel into a dwelling

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1. The Proposal

1.1 The applicant and his family run a Garden Centre and Nursery known as Eastwick Plant Centre on the Overton to Ellesmere Road at Knolton. They live on site in a property known as Eastwick Manor. Knolton Methodist Chapel stands alongside the road on the edge of the garden.

1.2 The application is for the conversion of the chapel into a dwelling.

1.3 It follows the submission of application P/2023/0299 (for the conversion of the chapel into a residential annexe to Eastwick Manor) which was withdrawn at the suggestion of the Planning Case Officer who felt that the chapel and the house were too far apart and that the chapel was too large to be approved solely as an annexe.

1.4 None of the statutory consultees and none of the LPA internal consultees objected to the proposal.

1.5 The Case Officer helpfully indicated that although the chapel was, in his opinion too distant and too big to be approved as an annexe it met national and local planning policy for conversion into a dwelling.



The chapel lends itself to conversion. It has been well maintained and will not require major repairs, alteration or extension. It has space around it to provide good levels of amenity and its use as a dwelling will not affect surrounding properties.

1.6 The accommodation will be used in association with the main house possibly initially by the applicant's mother in law Jasmine who joined the family because of illness and by Katherine, his daughter who has special educational and medical needs. Both require significant support but will benefit from some measure of independent living. **Medical evidence of their needs can be provided.**

1.7 There is no desire or intention to let or sell the house to non family members. Katherine is in her early twenties and will need lifelong care.

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1.8 The chapel is in good physical condition and requires few alterations to the exterior with the exception of new doors in the south and east elevations to facilitate passage between the two properties. Solar panels and conservation roof lights will be installed.

1.9 The principal (western) elevation which faces the road will generally remain unaltered and any minor repairs that prove necessary will be carried out using matching materials and traditional building techniques.

1.10 Internally the alterations will respect the fabric of the building and accommodation will be limited to a bedroom, a galley kitchen, living area and a toilet on the ground floor and a bedroom and shower room with an airing cupboard on a mezzanine floor above. A significant area of the ground floor will remain full height to expose the roof detail.

1.11 Water from the roof will be harvested with overflow draining to soak aways as at present and foul waste will drain to the existing septic tank serving Eastwick Manor.

The septic tank is working well but the applicant is happy to replace it with a treatment plant to further improve the effluent quality if this is considered helpful. It will drain to a drainage field not to a watercourse. Installing a treatment plant will bring environmental benefits.

1.12 Two parking spaces and a cycle stand will be provided on the car park serving the applicant's home and the nursery and a footpath will link the parking spaces with the chapel.

2. The Application Site

2.1 The chapel is located at the side of the main Overton to Ellesmere Road at Knolton some three or four miles from Overton. It measures 11.1m long by 5.6m wide.

2.2 There is a small fenced garden to the front and a similar area at the side and rear. The rear garden can be made bigger if required by the Council.

2.3 Eastwick Plant Centre and Eastwick Manor are immediately adjacent, to the north east and there are a small number of other dwellings on the opposite side of the road. The Trotting Mare Pub and Caravan Park and the Trotting Mare garage are a few hundred metres away to the south and south east alongside another small cluster of dwellings.

2.4 The chapel is not a Listed Building but it has heritage value, being opened in 1868 and extended in 1904. It has been well maintained and is physically sound.

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2.5 A Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by a respected conservation consultancy confirms that the alterations proposed and a residential use will not have an adverse impact on the building or its heritage value.

2.6 The Council's conservation officer considered the proposals as part of the earlier annexe planning application and confirmed that they were acceptable.

3. Planning Policy

3.1 The proposal to convert the chapel into residential use accords with national and local planning policy.

3.2 Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Notes 6 (Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities) and 24 (the Historic Environment) and the Conservation Principles for the Re use, Preservation and Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment published by Cadw have all been taken into consideration in the preparation of the conversion scheme.

3.3 Similarly the policies in the adopted Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (Particularly Policy H23) and Policy H9 in the emerging Local Development Plan have informed the proposals:-

- The building is worthy of retention because of its appearance, its architectural quality, character and heritage value
- The chapel is no longer needed for its original use and has been unused for some time.
- The building is structurally sound and can be converted without rebuilding, significant alterations or major repairs.
- Alterations will be kept to the absolute minimum.
- No extensions are necessary or proposed.
- The character of the building will be preserved and its original use will still be clearly evident.
- The alterations will be carried out using traditional methods and appropriate materials.
- The proposals will have no adverse impact in the landscape.
- The residential curtilage will have no impact on the character of the area.

4. Sustainability

4.1 The proposals are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

4.2 The number of vehicle movements generated by the modest residential use will be minimal and the carbon footprint of the project will be tiny.

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4.3 Solar panels will be placed on the roof to support sustainable heating. The aim is to exceed level three in the former Code for Sustainable Homes.

4.4 Rain water will be harvested and waste water will be directed to the existing septic tank which is working efficiently. There will be no increase in the size of the family and the amount of waste directed to the septic tank will remain unaltered. The applicant is happy to replace the septic tank with a new treatment plant which is acknowledged to produce significantly cleaner effluent.

The River Dee is several miles away and is not at risk of pollution from the site.

4.5 All materials will be acquired locally from sustainably managed sources and as is commensurate with maintaining the historic fabric of the building it will be heavily insulated to minimise heat loss and reduce fuel consumption. Low usage water and electricity fittings will be used.

4.6 Local labour will be employed to carry out the conversion wherever possible.

5. Residential Amenity

5.1 The new accommodation will offer a high level of residential amenity and privacy and it will have no impact on the amenity or privacy of the applicants.

5.2 There are no other dwellings in close proximity to the chapel to be affected.

6. Drainage

6.1 Surface Water:

Surface water will be harvested for use in the nursery and any unused water will go to the existing soakaway system, as at present.

6.2 Foul Waste:

As previously stated foul waste will go into the septic tank serving the applicant's home. The tank is working properly and no pollution is being caused. However the applicant is happy to replace the septic tank with a new treatment plant if this is considered helpful.

The chapel is very close to the outer boundary of the SAC and there is no potential for any waste water to reach the River Dee.

Although the planning application is for a dwelling (which the LPA has confirmed is acceptable in planning policy terms) the accommodation is only

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required for family member(s) in need of ongoing care and the dwelling will only ever be used by people who would otherwise live in the applicant's home.

There will be no increase in the quantity or concentrations of phosphorous or other pollutants generated at the site. On the contrary installing a treatment plant will bring environmental benefits.

Natural Resources Wales has previously confirmed that it has no objection to the chapel being used as an annexe.

Whilst the use of the dwelling could be controlled by planning condition **the applicant is prepared to offer a unilateral undertaking to only use the chapel as an annexe and will enter into a S106 Agreement to confirm this. This will ensure that there is no increase in the quantity of waste water produced at the site. If the applicant's offer to replace the existing septic tank with a new treatment plant is accepted the quality of the effluent will be significantly improved.**

Unilateral Undertakings / S106 agreements run with the land and are binding on future owners of the property. An undertaking will be offered on appeal.

7. Access and Parking

7.1 The dwelling will not have independent vehicular access onto the passing highway.



Vehicles will park on the car park serving the applicant's home. Visibility at the point of access is very good and the proposal will have no impact on highway safety

7.2 Two parking spaces and space for vehicles to manoeuvre will be provided on the car park serving Eastwick Manor and the Plant Centre. The Council has previously indicated that this parking arrangement will be acceptable.

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Parking spaces and room for vehicles to manoeuvre will be provided on the car park next to Eastwick Manor

7.3 The applicant is prepared to offer a unilateral undertaking and to enter into a S106 Agreement to use the chapel as an annexe and to provide and retain the parking spaces. The new accommodation is needed for family member(s) in need of life long care and although they are not likely to personally require the parking spaces they will be provided and will not be relinquished. The agreement will be binding on future owners of the property although there is no intention or plan to sell. An undertaking will be offered on appeal.

7.4 Space will also be available for bicycles.

7.5 Visibility at the access is excellent in both directions (it was constructed following consultation with the highway authority) and the additional traffic generated by the new dwelling will be negligible. The proposal will have no impact on highway safety.

7.6 By contrast a non residential use which could be implemented without reference to the council could generate significantly greater and potentially more dangerous traffic than a dwelling.

8. Ecology

8.1 No habitat will be damaged by the proposed conversion and no protected species will be harmed.

8.2 An ecology survey carried out by a licensed ecologist has confirmed that no bats, Great Crested Newts or birds will be adversely affected.

8.3 The survey report is submitted as part of the planning application and the Council's ecologist has previously accepted its findings.

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9. Alternative Uses for the Chapel

9.1 The chapel is a “Place of Worship” and falls within Use Class D1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order.

9.2 This use class includes clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries, museums, libraries, halls, law courts, church halls and non residential education and training centres.

9.3 The chapel was in regular use until some two years ago and it could lawfully be used for any of the uses listed above. All of these alternative uses would attract significantly more traffic and generate more potentially hazardous activity in the highway than a small dwelling, especially one used as an annexe.

10. Community Safety

10.1 Introducing a residential use into the chapel as proposed will improve safety for the local community as the activity will discourage burglary and trespass (a real problem in rural areas) and ensure that the historically important building is not vandalised.

10.2 A residential use will be significantly safer than any of the potential alternative uses.

11. Planning Obligation / S106 Agreement

11.1 The Highway Authority and Natural Resources Wales have confirmed that they have no objection to the chapel being used as a residential annexe to Eastwick Manor.

11.2 We are of the view that any concerns about any aspect of the proposed development can be adequately controlled by planning condition and we invite the Council to attach such conditions to the planning permission as they consider necessary.

11.3 Notwithstanding this the Development Management Manual points out that planning obligations offered by applicants and S106 Agreements can be used to make the site specific impact of “unacceptable” developments acceptable in planning terms. Such obligations created under section 106 of the 1990 Act can:-

- restrict the development or use of land in any specified way

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- require specified operations or activities to be carried out in, on, under or over the land
- require the land (and buildings) to be used in any specified way
- require a sum or sums of money to be paid to the authority (in appropriate cases) on a specified date or dates periodically

11.4 The applicant family desperately need the additional accommodation and they have no desire or intention of ever selling the chapel as it is intended as life long accommodation for their daughter Katherine.

With this in mind they are happy to enter into a S106 Agreement agreeing to only use the chapel as an annexe to Eastwick Manor, to provide the parking spaces and not to let or sell it as an independent dwelling.

11.5 Such an agreement will ensure that safe vehicle parking is always available off the highway and that the accommodation does not increase the volume and phosphorous concentration of waste water produced at the site (NRW standing advice to Planning Authorities).

11.6 The requirements of a unilateral undertaking and a S106 Agreement run with the land and remain in place even if the properties are sold.

11.7 If the LPA thinks that other safeguards are needed to address any concerns they have the applicant(s) are happy to consider them.

11.8 An undertaking will be offered on appeal.

12. Summary

12.1 In summary:

- The planning application is for the conversion of Knolton Chapel into a dwelling. It follows the submission of application P/2023/0299 (for the conversion of the chapel into an annexe) which was withdrawn at the suggestion of the Case Officer who felt that converting the chapel into a dwelling was more appropriate.
- The accommodation is urgently needed for member(s) of the applicant's family, Jasmine his Mother in Law and more particularly his daughter Katherine who has life long special medical and educational needs. Medical evidence of their needs can be provided.
- The dwelling will be used in association with Eastwick Manor and will never be sold or let separately. The applicant is prepared to enter into a S106 Agreement to ensure that the chapel is only used as an annexe and that off road vehicle parking will always be provided. An undertaking to this effect will be offered on appeal.
- The development satisfies national and local planning policy.

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- The development will be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.
- A Heritage Impact Assessment has confirmed that converting the chapel into a dwelling in the manner proposed and the residential use are acceptable.
- The dwelling will offer a good level of amenity and will not have an adverse impact on any of the nearby properties.
- The dwelling will be connected to the septic tank serving the applicant's home which is working well and it will not increase the quantity or concentrations of phosphorous or other pollutants generated at the site.
- The applicant has offered to replace the septic tank with a new waste treatment plant to further improve effluent quality. Converting the chapel into a dwelling will bring about environmental benefits.
- The access is safe and the parking arrangements will ensure that the development has no impact on highway safety.
- No habitat will be destroyed and no protected species will be harmed.
- The residential use will have no impact in the landscape.
- If the chapel is not converted to residential use as proposed it could lawfully be used for any other use in Use Class D1 (Non Residential Institutions) which have potential for much greater impacts.