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# Former Methodist Chapel Knolton

Flint

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A  
Heritage Impact Assessment

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February 2023  
*Mercian Heritage Series No.2081*

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**Former Methodist Chapel  
Grange Road  
Knolton  
Flint  
(Wrexham Maelor)  
NGR: SJ 37842 38971**

**A  
Heritage Impact Assessment  
on  
Proposed Development**

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Page | - 1 -

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*Contents*

|                                         |           |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction</b>                  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2. Planning Guidelines</b>           | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>3. Setting &amp; Outline History</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>4. Description</b>                   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>5. Discussion</b>                    | <b>17</b> |
| <b>6. The Proposals</b>                 | <b>18</b> |
| <b>7. Heritage Impact Assessment</b>    | <b>20</b> |
| <b>8. Conclusions</b>                   | <b>21</b> |

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**Summary**

*There are proposals to convert the now redundant Methodist chapel at Knolton into a residential annexe. The building is not listed but would be considered as an undesignated heritage asset under the guidelines of Planning Policy Wales (PPW). Under the guidance of the PPW, this Consultancy was commissioned to produce an assessment of the impact on the building and on any other heritage assets adjacent to it. The report is not concerned with any other planning matters. It concludes that overall the scheme is well-considered and proportionate and will result in little or no harm to the significance of the buildings or any adjacent heritage assets.*

**Crynodeb**

*Mae cynigion i droi'r capel Methodistaidd sydd bellach yn segur yn Knolton yn anecs breswyl. Nid yw'r adeilad wedi ei restru ond byddai'n cael ei ystyried fel ased treftadaeth heb ei ddynodi o dan ganllawiau Polisi Cynllunio Cymru (PPW). O dan arweiniad y Cyngor Cefn Gwlad, comisiynwyd yr Ymgynghoriaeth hon i gynhyrchu asesiad o'r effaith ar yr adeilad ac ar unrhyw asedau treftadaeth eraill yn gyfagos iddo. Nid yw'r adroddiad yn ymwneud ag unrhyw faterion cynllunio eraill. Daw i'r casgliad bod y cynllun yn gyffredinol yn cael ei ystyried ac yn gymesur ac y bydd yn arwain at fawr ddim niwed neu ddim niwed i arwyddocâd yr adeiladau neu unrhyw asedau treftadaeth cyfagos.*

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 General**

Proposals are being developed to convert a redundant Methodist chapel at Knolton, on the Welsh-English border just to the north of Ellesmere, into a residential annexe to an adjacent property. The building isn't listed but would be considered as an undesignated heritage asset under the guidelines of *Planning Policy Wales*.

Under the same guidelines, this report has been commissioned to assess the heritage impact of the proposals on the character, setting or significance of the building and on any other designated or undesignated heritage assets adjacent to the site.

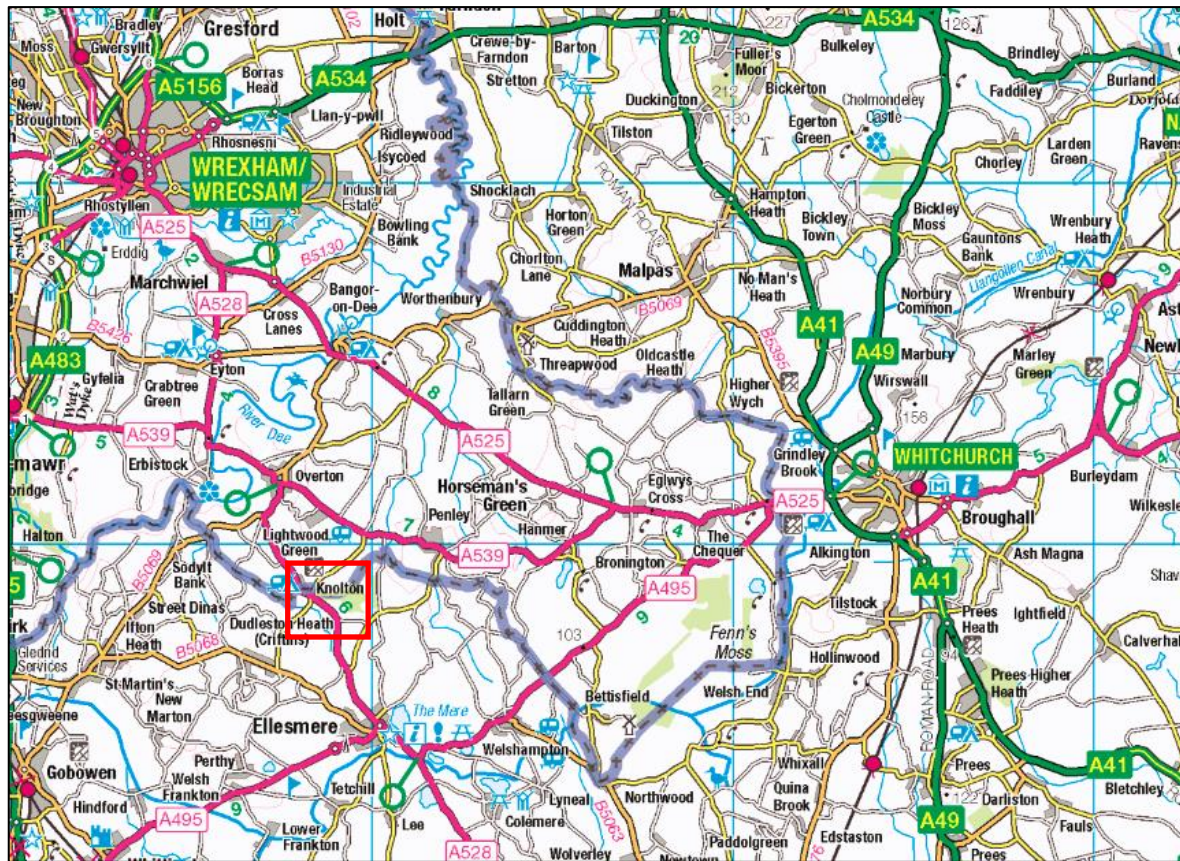


Fig.1: Location plan.  
(OS Open Data)

## 2. General Planning Guidance

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 received the Royal Assent in March 2016, with some of its provisions coming into force in May of the same year. The main planning laws are enshrined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990. Section 66 of the Act deals with the responsibilities of local planning authorities – the decision makers - when dealing with planning applications that could impact on heritage assets. The first part of Section 66 states:

*‘In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’.*<sup>1</sup>

The main planning guidance for Wales is now set out in *Planning Policy Wales*, originally issued in 2002 and now already in its 11<sup>th</sup> iteration. Chapter 6 deals with the historic environment. It states in paragraph 6.1.5:

*‘The planning system must take into account the Welsh Government’s objectives to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. The historic environment is a finite, non-renewable and shared resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales. It contributes to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life’.*

and in paragraph 6.1.13:

*‘Applicants for listed building consent must be able to justify their proposals, show why the alteration or demolition of a listed building is desirable or necessary and consider the impact of any change upon its significance. This must be included in a heritage impact statement, which will be proportionate both to the significance of the building and to the degree of change proposed’.*

Paragraph 6.1.10 states:

*‘There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage. For any development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’.*

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<sup>1</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 c.9 section 66 (1), 41

However, Paragraph 6.1.11 recognises that in many cases adaptive re-use will be the only option available in order to retain and preserve a heritage asset, stating:

*‘For listed buildings, the aim should be to find the best way to protect and enhance their special qualities, retaining them in sustainable use. The continuation or reinstatement of the original use should generally be the first option, but not all original uses will now be viable or appropriate. The application of planning and listed building controls should recognise the need for flexibility where new uses have to be considered in order to secure a building’s survival or provide it with a sound economic future’.*

Earlier versions of PPW re-introduced the concept of ‘Undesignated historic assets’ – adapted the English system’s ‘non-designated heritage assets’ first outlined in PPS5 and repeated in the NPPF. In the latest version (11) of PPW these are now referred to (in para 6.1.29) as ‘Historic assets of special local importance’:

*‘planning authorities may develop lists of historic assets of special local interest, that do not have statutory protection, but that make an important contribution to local distinctiveness and have the potential to contribute to public knowledge’.*

The potential impact of any changes to heritage assets needs to be assessed during the development of the proposals for such changes; Cadw, the national heritage body in Wales, have produced guidance on the production of such heritage assessments – *Heritage Impact Assessments in Wales* (2017) – which outlines what information is required. It:

*‘should take into account sufficient information to enable both the significance of the asset and the impact of change to be understood. It should be proportionate both to the significance of the historic asset and to the degree of change proposed.’*

Allied to the PPW, the Welsh Government produced, in 2017, TAN24 – *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*. Section 5.13 states that:

*‘When determining a listed building consent application, the local planning authority should consider the following issues:*

- The importance and grade of the building and its intrinsic architectural or historic interest;*
- The physical features of the building which justify its listing and contribute to its significance (for example its form and layout, materials, construction and detail) including any features of importance such as the interior, which may have come to light after the building’s inclusion on the list;*
- The contribution of curtilage and setting to the significance of the building, as well as its contribution to its local scene;*
- The impact of the proposed works on the significance of the building;*

- *The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial community benefits, for example by contributing to the area's economy or the enhancement of the local environment.'*

Section 5.14 adds:

*'Many listed buildings can sustain a degree of sensitive alteration and extension to accommodate continuing or new uses. Past changes that reflect the history of use and ownership may themselves be aspects of the special interest of the listed building...'*

In May 2017 Cadw produced two relevant 'best practice guidance' notes. In *Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales*, Section 4.5 states:

*'New work or alteration may sometimes be necessary or appropriate to keep a historic building in long-term viable use or to give it a new lease of life. You must be able to explain why the work is needed and provide sufficient information to explain the impact of your proposal on the significance of the building. The quality of design and execution should enhance the aesthetic value of the building and its setting, and additions should not dominate. Any new work should also respect the performance characteristics of the building. The choice of appropriate materials and craftsmanship is crucial. The need for quality in new work applies at every level, from small interventions in a historic room to major new buildings or developments'.*

And Section 4.7 added:

*'Sometimes, buildings cease to be useful for their original purpose and new uses may be necessary to secure their long-term viability. This is particularly true of redundant farm buildings, industrial buildings, places of worship or large houses, for example. Change of use will almost invariably result in loss of historical form, fabric or detail, such as internal fittings, but these losses should be kept to the minimum necessary so that the original use can still be legible'.*

In *Managing Listed Buildings at Risk in Wales*, Section 4.2 states:

*'Beneficial use funds the long-term maintenance of a listed building, either directly or indirectly. Taking action to keep a building in beneficial use, or to secure a new use if necessary, is vital'.*

An earlier Cadw guidance document, *Conservation Principles*, of 2011, provides a more succinct, pragmatic and useful summary of the issues of conservation and its core principle (para.1.1) recognises that:

*‘Changes in the historic environment are inevitable. This can be the result of decay caused by natural processes, damage caused by wear and tear of use, and the need to respond to social, cultural, economic and technological changes’* (para.1.1).

Furthermore, it states that *‘conservation is the careful management of change’* (para.1.2).

### 3. Setting & Outline History

Knolton is not really a village, but a scattering of small hamlets and farmsteads within a projecting portion of the historic Welsh county of Flint, very close to the modern border with England – the nearest town being Ellesmere, just over that boundary. It is set within a post-glacial undulating landscape, well-watered and with an abundance of ponds often formed from ‘kettle holes’ and the site lies above the valley of the Shell Brook which, for several kilometres, is the boundary between England and Wales.

Historically this area was a part of the ‘Maelor Sae snag’ which was once within the English kingdom of Mercia by the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE and on the eastern side of the definitive Offa’s Dyke, which would account for the many place-names derived from Saxon in the area instead of from Welsh – such as Knolton, probably derived from ‘the settlement or farm by the knoll’. The former Methodist chapel lies at the southern end of Knolton, only about 250m from the border.

A date plaque on the older portion of the chapel shows that it was built for the Primitive Methodists - a fundamentalist offshoot of mainstream Methodism which grew in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century; their name derived from the fact that they believed their form of lay-orientated worship and organisation was more in keeping with the original teachings of Wesley. They tended to be more rural in scope and their chapel were much simpler than those of the mainstream. However, in 1932 they united with the Wesleyan Methodists and the United Methodists to form a new all-encompassing Methodist Church.

Like many rural chapels the one at Knolton was built on a small but available patch of land by a road; this was donated by a Mr Hollywood. No architect was probably involved in the design, just a local builder acting on the orders of the minister or congregation. The chapel was opened for services on the first Sunday of November 1868; a local newspaper account recorded that there were morning and evening services and that ‘*The congregations were very large, the chapel being inadequate for the occasion, many failed to obtain admission*’.

The size of the chapel continued to be an issue, but in October 1904 proposals for the extension and some alterations to the chapel – costing £70 – were approved; however, the datestone of the extension is dated September 1904 so works had clearly already started. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century congregation numbers were in decline and this continued into the early-21<sup>st</sup> century by which time there were too few members to keep the chapel viable – and it closed.



Fig.2: Extract from the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the 6” Ordnance Survey map, revised in 1898.



Pl.1: General view along the main road with the Chapel to the right.



Pl.2: The 1868 datestone.



Pl.3: The 1904 datestone.

## **4. Description**

The building is a rectangular structure built parallel to the adjacent road to the south, but it is obvious that the northern two-thirds predates the southern third. In front of the chapel is a very narrow railed area with a low brick plinth and a gateway towards its right-hand end.

### **4.1 The Original Chapel**

#### **4.1.1 The Exterior**

The original chapel is a rectangular structure originally of three bays. It is built of hand-made bricks laid, on the front elevation, to a Flemish bond and on the other three sides to a loose English Garden Wall bond.

On the front elevation are two large window openings under plain semi-circular brick arched heads and projecting stone sills. These contain timber-framed windows with moulded glass – clearly not primary. Centrally positioned between them is the 1868 date plaque.

Beneath this there is a subtle degree of disturbance in the brick bond and a slight degree of irregularity in the horizontal coursing. This was presumably the result of a carefully blocked primary doorway into the building.

The rear elevation is quite plain, apart from the two matching rear window openings – of the same size as and directly opposite to those in the front elevation. These retain multi-paned cast-iron glazing which appears to be primary.

The original gable ends were both plain, and the northern one is still external; the southern is abutted by the later extension and a doorway inserted at ground-floor level between the two phases.

#### **4.1.2 The Roof**

The roof is plain gabled and covered in plain slate; it has a ridge of interlocking ridge-tiles, probably dating from the early-20<sup>th</sup> century changes to the building. Structurally it seems to be of three bays, but except for the feet of the truss rafters, the roof structure is not visible because of the ceiling within. They are apparently of ‘A-frame’ design carrying a single tier of purlins.

#### **4.1.3 The Interior**

The interior has recently had most of its fixtures, fittings and pews removed, leaving only the reading desk or pulpit at the northern end. Around the walls is thin-boarded match-boarded dado panelling; this rises up to respect the pulpit. The walls and ceiling are otherwise quite plain, as is the boarded floor.



Pl.4: The front elevation of the Chapel.



Pl.5: The rear elevation of the original Chapel.



Pl.6: The interior of the original part of the Chapel, looking north.



Pl.7: The interior, looking south; note difference in glazing on either side.

## **4.2 The Extension**

### **4.2.1 The Exterior**

The Extension was evidently designed to copy the basic proportions and cross-section of the original Chapel but is built of quite different bright red and crisp brick, probably machine-made. These are laid to a Flemish Stretcher bond on all three external elevations.

On the front elevation to the road is the present main entrance into the chapel. This is a tall opening topped by a semi-circular brick head; the height of this was clearly intended to match that of the window openings in the original Chapel. The result is that the simply panelled door has a stilted arched fanlight above it – fitted with moulded glass. The doorway is flanked by thin loop windows with stone lintels and sills – and also with moulded glass glazing.

The rear elevation has a single window opening designed to match those of the original pair of the rear wall of the original Chapel but only the lower section was actually a window. The glazing is of the same cast-iron multi-paned type and it is assumed that this was removed from one of the original front window openings when these were re-glazed at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The south gable end is quite plain.



Pl.8: The rear elevation of the chapel, with the extension to the left.

#### **4.2.2 The Roof**

The roof is plain gabled and covered in plain slate, with interlocking ridge tiles. It appears to be of one single bay, the common rafters supported by a single tier of purlins.

#### **4.2.3 The Interior**

The interior is divided into two by an axial stud partition. The internal walls have a tall, panelled dado below match-boarding up to the plain ceiling. That ceiling is well below the tops of the front and rear windows – the tops of which only look into a loft area.

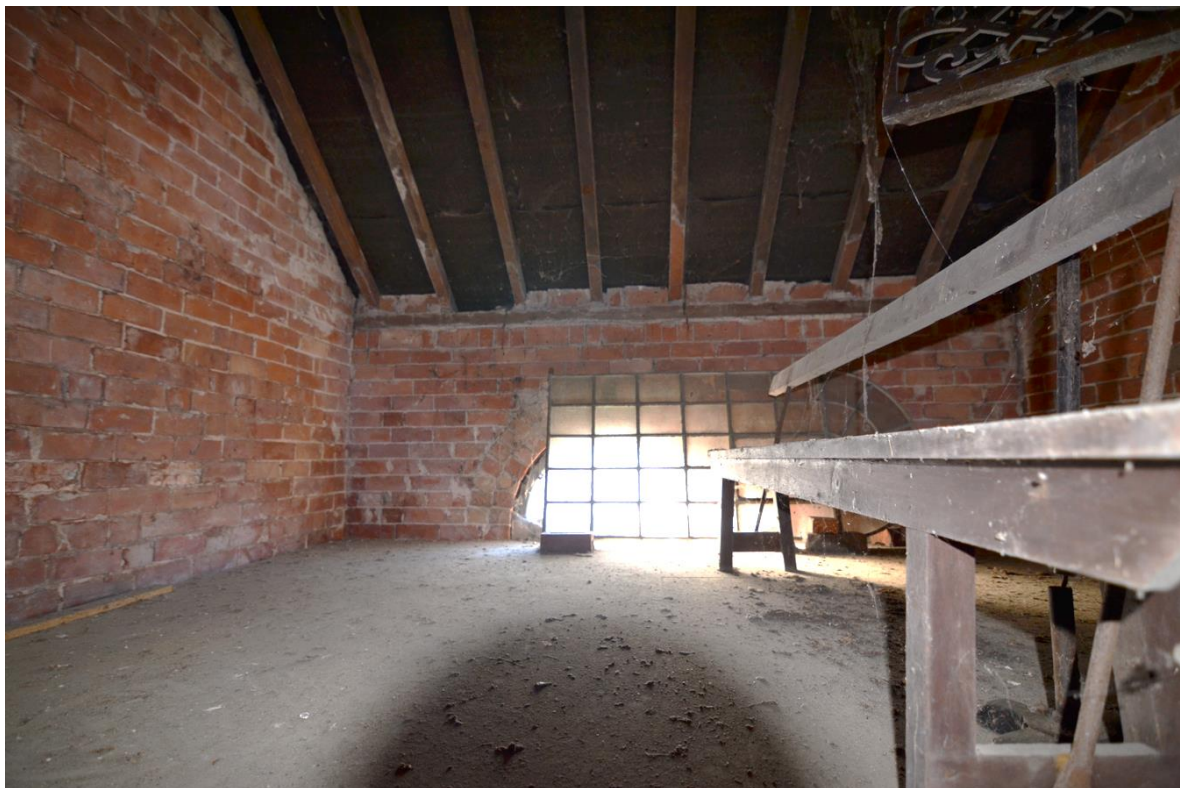
The fact that above the ceiling the internal faces of the walls are of bare brick indicates that the ceiling is primary. The tiled surfaces to each of these space is different and seem to be of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. A doorway from the front room or lobby area leads into the main body of the chapel within the original portion of the building.



Pl.9: The interior of the extension, looking through to the original Chapel.



Pl.10: The interior of the entrance into the extension.



Pl.11: The roof-space of the extension, showing ceiling bisecting the rear window.

## 5. Discussion

The Chapel is a humble and altered structure but is of sufficient heritage value in terms of its architecture and history to warrant being considered as an undesignated heritage asset under the guidance of PPW – though would clearly not be of sufficient significance to warrant statutory listing.

The phasing and development of the Chapel is fairly straightforward – with the original Chapel built in 1868 as a small and humble structure typical of the Primitive Methodists. This would have been one single space with a central doorway in the front elevation and lit by tall windows on either side with cast-iron multi-paned glazing. The original layout of pews and reading desk etc. is unknown as this was obviously changed quite radically when the Chapel was extended.

The second phase added the southern portion of the chapel – which is confidently dated to 1904 by the datestone – though it would have been finished in the following year. The original Chapel would have remained the main worship space, and the additional space could have been used for ancillary uses, perhaps including a Sunday school, etc.

As well as adding this extra space the early-20<sup>th</sup> century phase also resulted in the blocking of the original entrance into the Chapel and its replacements by a doorway off the new extension – the front of which became, in part, a lobby. The internal pewing of the chapel would have had to be changed to adapt to the new entry through its gable wall.

It also seems that the front windows of the original Chapel were altered during this phase, with moulded glass in timber frames replaced the cast-iron windows – though these survived on the rear elevation and one appears to have been re-set in the rear window of the extension. The match-boarded dado in the original Chapel also probably dates from this phase.

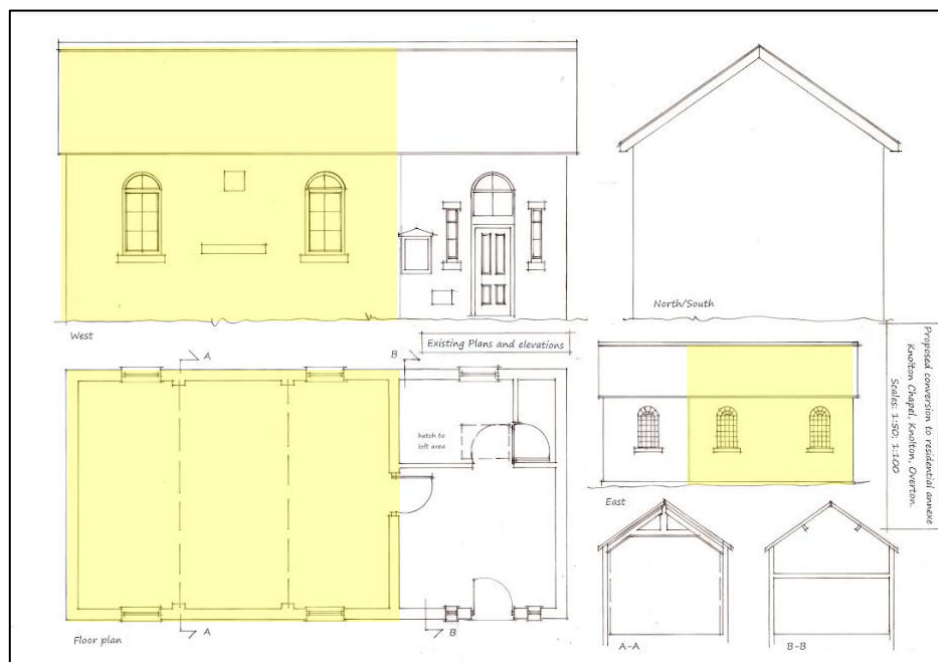


Fig.3: Existing plans and elevations, original phase shaded in yellow.

## **6. The Proposals**

### **6.1 The Reasons for the Proposals**

The former chapel is now redundant and in need of a new use – as a religious one appears not to be likely again. Other potential uses, such as an office or commercial premises, are equally unlikely given the lack of any land for parking or even for access.

The present proposals relate to the conversion of the building to a residential annexe to the adjacent property associated with the nursery. This will allow for a family member to occupy the converted chapel whilst still being close to the main house – and will negate the issues regarding separate road access, etc. The proposals will result in the refurbishment of the property and ensuring the future of an undesignated heritage asset.

### **6.2 The Proposed Works**

The existing external shell of the building will be little altered. The changes to the front elevation are minor – with a small pair of conservation roof lights in the front slope and a set of solar panels in the slope over the extension to the right.

To the rear, a new set of doors will be inserted between the two windows of the original Chapel. There will also be a single rooflight and more solar panels at the left-hand, or southern, end of the roof. In the south gable a new central doorway with a window directly above will be inserted.

The internal changes involve a re-ordering to create the necessary bedrooms and bathrooms in the extension. The main body of the original Chapel will be retained as the living room, with a mezzanine storey added over the southern third of the space accessed by steps up. The proposals are shown on the figures below.

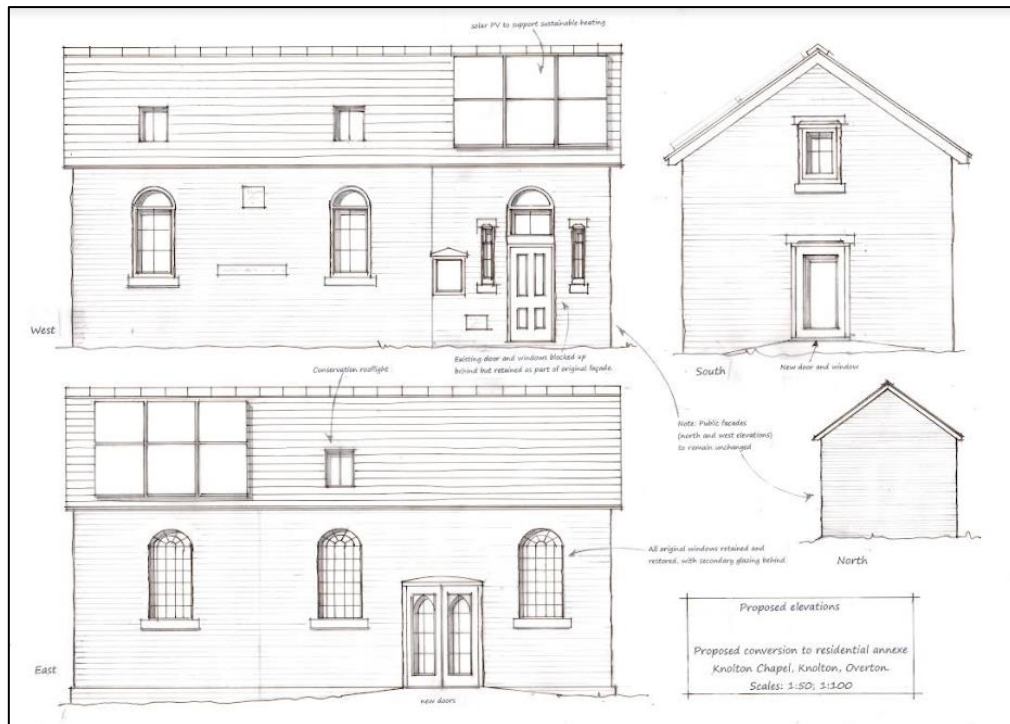


Fig.4: The proposed elevations.

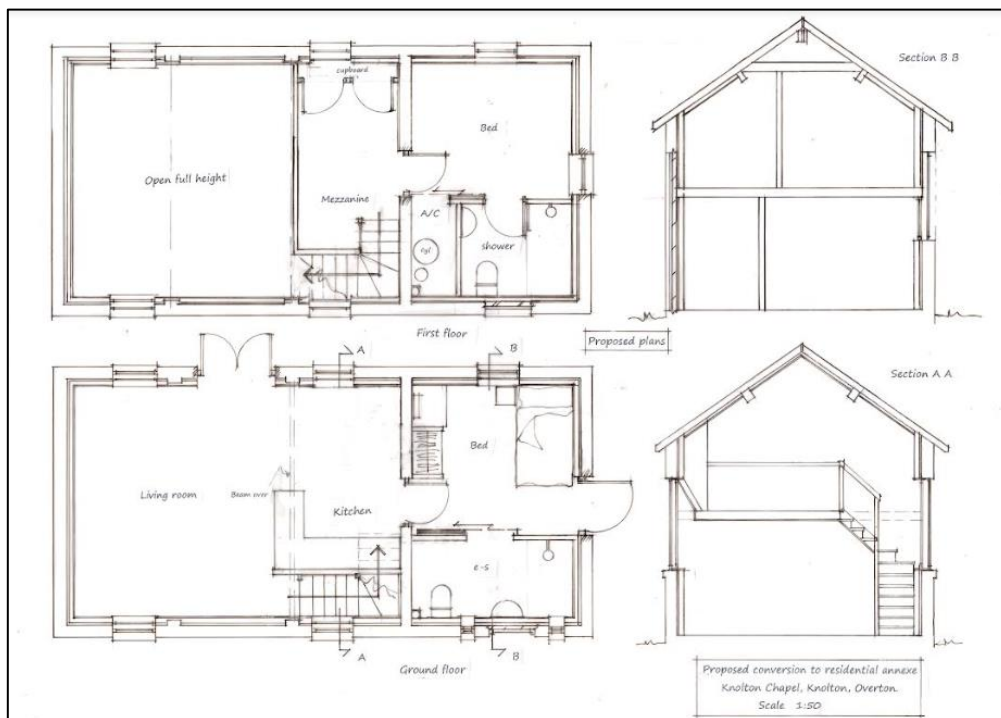


Fig.5: Proposed plans and sections.

## 7. Heritage Impact Assessment

### 7.1 Impact on the Building

The former chapel is considered to be a building of sufficient heritage value to warrant being considered as an undesignated heritage asset under the guidelines of the PPW. Consequently there is an assumption that it should be preserved and retained.

These proposals will help to ensure the long-term future of the asset. The proposals will result in ensuing a ‘beneficial use’ of the former chapel that it presently does not enjoy because of its condition, accessibility and internal layout.

To reiterate Section 4.7 of Cadw’s *Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales*, ‘Sometimes, building cease to be useful for their original purpose and new uses may be necessary to secure their long-term viability. This is particularly true of redundant farm buildings’.

The external changes to the building are limited – especially to the principal elevation. The main change will be the introduction of the solar panels, but these are both reversible in character and increasingly seen as an important part of the reduction of the carbon footprint of buildings. Their location is also designed to be on the extension of the chapel and helps to distinguish the phasing of the roof structure.

Overall, there will be an element in change as a result of these proposals, but such change is considered to equate to negligible harm to the character, setting or significance of the listed buildings. It is not considered that the elements that will be altered form part of the ‘special architectural or historic interest’ of the listed buildings.

The proposals are considered to meet all national and local planning policies related to heritage matters set out in Section 2 above and, above all, ‘...to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses...’ as outlined in the 1990 Planning Act and in para.6.5.9 of *Planning Policy Wales*.

Whilst there will be a degree of change it is considered that such change meets the requirements in Section 6.1.7 of PPW that ‘Any change that impacts on an historic asset or its setting should be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way’.

### 7.2 Impact on Adjacent Heritage Assets

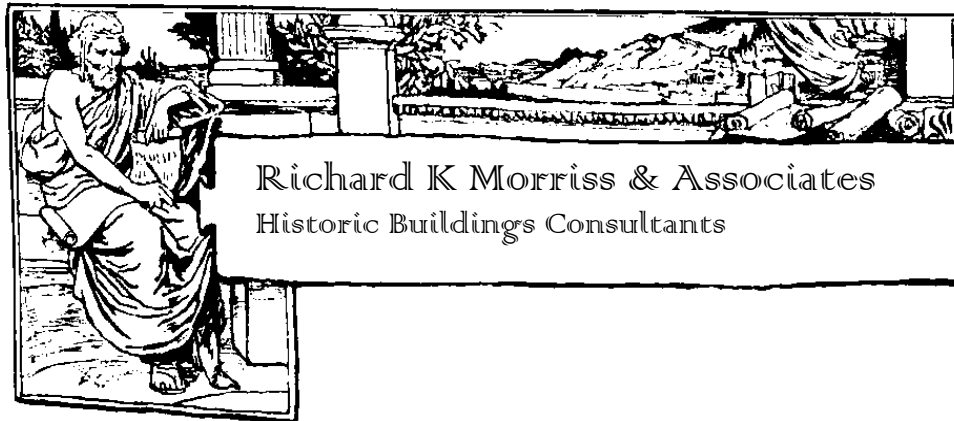
Given the location of the chapel in a fairly isolated roadside position, and the fact that there are no other listed buildings close by, it is considered that there will be no ‘harm’ caused to the character, setting or significance of adjacent heritage assets, designated or undesignated.

## 8. Conclusions

For the reasons outlined above the proposals are considered to be sympathetic to the historic character of the former chapel, and proportionate. It is considered that any minor changes caused by these proposals would not equate to any harm to the significance of the undesignated heritage asset.

All buildings and their settings have always evolved over time as their occupant's aspirations evolve and such change forms part of their significance as heritage assets. This was clearly outlined in the recently superseded Welsh Office *Circular 61/96* which stated, in respect of *listed* building that:

*‘Many listed buildings can sustain a degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses. Indeed, cumulative changes reflecting the history of use and ownership are themselves an aspect of the special interest of some buildings, and the merit of new alterations or additions, especially where they are generated within a secure and committed long-term ownership, should not be discounted’.*



## The Consultancy

*Richard K Morriss founded this Consultancy in 1995 after previously working for English Heritage and the Ironbridge Institute of the University of Birmingham and spending eight years as Assistant Director of the Hereford Archaeology Unit. Although Shropshire-based the Consultancy works throughout the UK on a wide variety of historic buildings for clients that include the National Trust, the Landmark Trust, English Heritage, the Crown Estates, owners, architects, local authorities, planning consultants and developers. It specialises in the archaeological and architectural analysis of historic buildings of all periods and planning advice related to them. It also undertakes heritage impact assessments and broader area appraisals and Conservation Management Plans.*

*Richard Morriss is a former Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and of the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists, currently archaeological advisor to four cathedrals and author of many academic papers and of 20 books, mainly on architecture and archaeology, including *The Archaeology of Buildings* (Tempus 2000), *The Archaeology of Railways* (Tempus 1999); *Roads: Archaeology & Architecture* (Tempus 2006) and ten in the *Buildings of* series: Bath, Chester, Ludlow, Salisbury, Shrewsbury, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Winchester, Windsor, Worcester (Sutton 1993-1994). The latest work is an Historic England funded monograph on the Houses of Hereford (Oxbow 2018).*

*He was a member of the project teams responsible for the restoration of Astley Castle, Warwickshire, winner of the 2013 RIBA Stirling Prize; the restoration of the Old Market House, Shrewsbury, winner of a 2004 RIBA Conservation Award; and Llwyn Celyn, Monmouthshire, winner of the RICS Conservation Project of the Year 2019. He has also been involved in several projects that have won, or been short-listed for, other awards including those of the Georgian Group for Mostyn House, Denbigh; St. Helen's House, Derby; Radbourne Hall, Derbyshire and Cusgarne Manor, Cornwall.*



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