

Planning Statement

Bettisfield Methodist Church
Bettisfield
Whitchurch
SY13 2LN

Proposed conversion of existing church into a single residential dwelling with all associated works

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August 2026

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted in connection with a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council ("The Local Planning Authority") for the residential conversion of Bettisfield Methodist Church to a single dwelling, with all associated works. The site address is:

Bettisfield Methodist Church
Bettisfield
Whitchurch
SY13 2LN

1.2 The proposed development will see the sustainable re-use of an existing building (former place of worship with a D1 use class) as a single residential dwelling house (C3 use).

1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in-conjunction with the other plans and documents which have been submitted in support of the full planning application, principally comprising:

- Completed Full Planning Application Form
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Susan Worsfild BSc (Hons) ACIEEM
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 001 – Location Plan
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 002 – Existing Block Plan
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 003 – Proposed Block plan
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 100 – Existing Plan
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 101 – Existing Elevations
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 102 – Proposed Plans
- Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 103 – Proposed Elevations

1.4 This Planning Statement provides a balanced overview of the planning issues associated with the proposed development and is designed to aid the Planning Officer in making their recommendations.

1.5 The information set-out within this statement confirms that the proposals can be delivered on-site without giving rise to any unacceptable or adverse impacts in planning or heritage terms.

2.0 The Application Site & Background

2.1 The application site relates to the existing Methodist Church in Bettisfield, along with its associated outdoor areas including parking area.

2.2 The Methodist Church comprises of a standard brick building with pitched tile roof and within its curtilage is tarmac frontage to the northeast and southeast, and a garden that is located to the southwest. It is situated in the rural village of Bettisfield and adjoined to the public highway via Chapel Lane, which in turn connects to Cadney Lane.

2.3 The Methodist Church has been vacant for a significant period and is no longer used as a local place of worship. The building has therefore become redundant and currently makes no active contribution to the community. Without a viable new use, there is risk that the building will deteriorate over time.

2.4 The proposal seeks to secure the long-term future of the building through an appropriate residential use whilst retaining the heritage and character value of the former church.

2.5 The application site is located within the village of Bettisfield and occupies a prominent position at the junction of Chapel View and Cadney Lane. The site is surrounded by established residential development, with detached dwelling located to the north, south and west. Beyond the village is the wider open countryside.

2.6 Vehicular access to the application site is gained directly from Chapel View via an existing access, with off-street parking provided within the site's curtilage. No alterations are proposed to the existing access arrangements as part of the development, and the proposal will continue to utilise the existing access and parking provision.

2.7 The existing Methodist Church is a traditional brick-built building with a pitched slate roof and distinctive arched window openings, reflecting its historic function as a place of worship. Whilst the proposal includes a few modest external alterations to facilitate its conversion into a dwelling, the building's overall scale, form and architectural character will be retained. The conversion has been carefully designed to preserve the appearance of the former chapel whilst securing a viable long-term use for the building.

2.8 The application site extends to approximately 157m^2 (0.02 hectares) and comprises the former chapel building together with its associated parking and amenity areas. The proposal will utilise the existing developed site in its entirety, with no extension of the site boundary or encroachment into surrounding undeveloped land. As such, the development represents the efficient re-use of an existing building within the established village of Bettisfield.

2.9 The application site is located wholly within the settlement boundary for Bettisfield as defined by the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (1996 – 2011) (UDP).

2.10 An aerial view of the application site is provided below, with the site identified approximately by the red star:

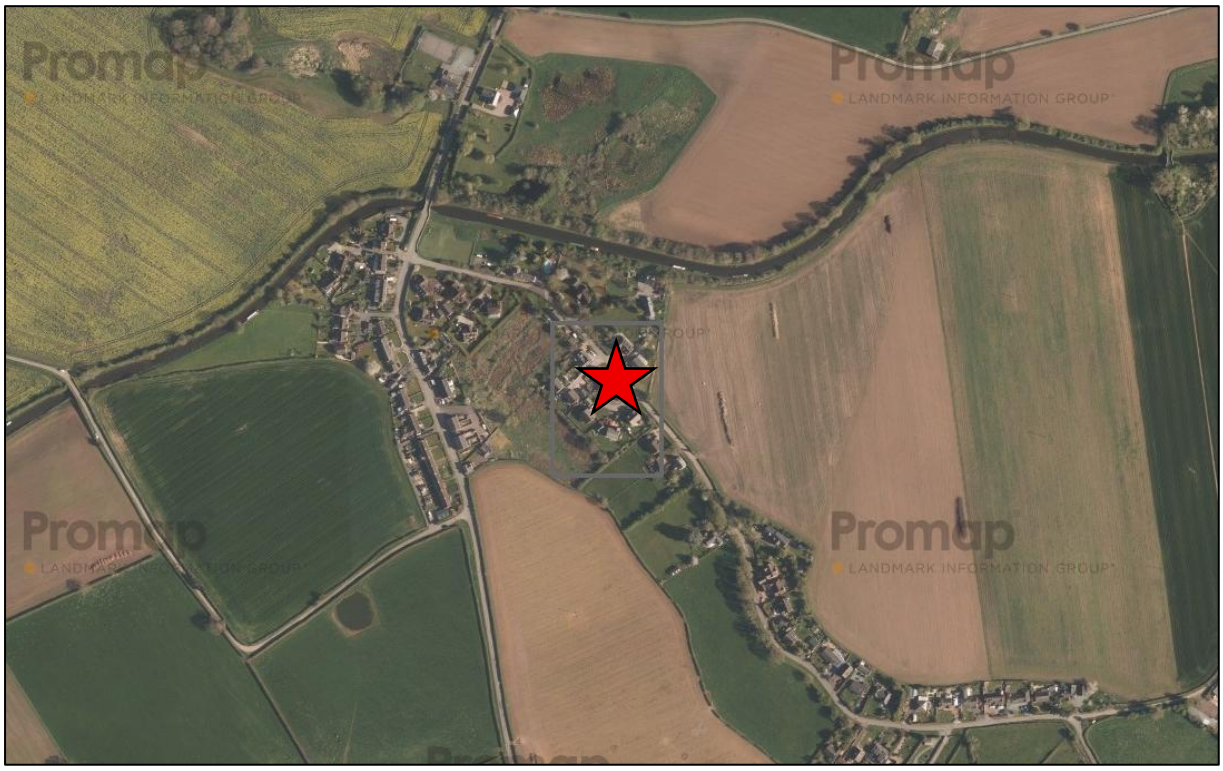


Figure 1: Aerial view of application site and surrounding context

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the residential conversion of the former church into a single residential dwelling, and all associated works required to facilitate the conversion. The proposal has been carefully designed to retain the building's existing character whilst providing a viable long-term residential use for the building to retain it into the future.

3.2 The proposed development involves the sympathetic conversion of the existing church building, with most of the the external building materials being retained. Alterations have been kept to the minimum necessary to accommodate the proposed residential use, ensuring that the building's overall scale, form and appearance remain largely unchanged.

3.3 The existing internal space will be adapted to provide modern residential accommodation comprising an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area,

together with a bedroom, shower room and utility room at ground-floor level. A new mezzanine floor will be introduced within the existing roof space to provide additional living accommodation whilst retaining a substantial full-height void, preserving the spacious character of the former chapel.

3.4 Externally, the proposal includes new window and door openings where required to serve the proposed residential accommodation. Existing architectural features, such as the principal entrance and characteristic arched window openings, will be retained wherever possible. A small number of conservation-style rooflights are proposed within the roof slopes to provide natural light to the mezzanine level, whilst a flue will also be installed to serve a wood-burning stove.

3.5 The existing vehicular access from Chapel View and associated parking area will be retained and will continue to serve the proposed dwelling. No alterations to the existing access arrangements are proposed, and the development is not expected to result in any significant increase in vehicle movements.

3.6 The proposal incorporates biodiversity enhancements informed by the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment. These include Woodcrete bat and bird boxes, positioned on the building in accordance with the ecologist's recommendations (Section 8 of the submitted Ecology Report). External lighting will also be designed to avoid unnecessary illumination of suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat. These measures will provide ecological enhancements alongside the re-use of the existing building and contribute towards the objectives of Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW).

3.7 The church's existing septic tank will be retained as part of the development, to deal with foul flows from the proposed conversion of the building into a single residential dwelling.

3.8 Overall, the proposal represents the sensitive conversion of a redundant former place of worship into a single dwelling, securing the long-term future of the building whilst preserving its architectural character and making effective use of an existing building within the settlement.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 At a national level, the proposal has been prepared having regard to *Planning Policy Wales* (Edition 12) and *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040*, which place sustainable development at the heart of the planning system.

4.2 National planning policy encourages the efficient use and re-use of existing buildings, promotes high quality design and seeks to create sustainable places which impact positively on their surroundings. The proposed

residential conversion of Bettisfield Methodist Church accords with these objectives by securing a viable long-term use for an existing building whilst also retaining the original character and appearance.

4.3 The proposal has also been prepared having regard to Technical Advice Note (TAN)12: Design, which promotes development that responds positively to local context and reinforces local distinctiveness. The proposed conversion has been carefully designed to retain the defining architectural features of the former chapel, with external alterations limited to those necessary to facilitate its residential use.

4.4 At the local level, the proposal has been assessed against the policies of the adopted *Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP)*. Of particular relevance are Policy PS2 (Development Strategy) and Policy GDP1 (General Development Principles), which together seek to ensure that development is sustainable, well designed and integrated successfully within its surroundings. Also of key relevance is UDP Policy H2, which relates to the residential development of unannotated land within settlement boundaries.

4.5 *UDP Policy PS2 – Development Strategy* seeks to promote sustainable patterns of development by directing development to appropriate locations whilst protecting the character and quality of the built and natural environment.

The proposal represents the beneficial re-use of an existing building within the established settlement of Bettisfield, making efficient use of existing land and infrastructure without extending the building footprint or encroaching onto undeveloped land.

4.6 *UDP Policy GDP1 – General Development Principles* states that development proposals will be permitted where they are appropriately designed, respect the character of the surrounding area, safeguard residential amenity, provide satisfactory access and parking arrangements, protect the natural environment and integrate successfully with their surroundings.

4.7 This proposal fully accords with the objectives of Policy GDP1. The conversion retains the defining architectural features, limits external alterations to those that are necessary for the conversion, retains the existing access and parking arrangements, incorporates biodiversity enhancements and does not give rise to any unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring amenity or the wider character of the area.

4.8 *UDP Policy H2 – Residential development of unannotated land within settlements* states consideration will be given to proposals for the residential development of unallocated land within established settlement boundaries provided the development is compatible with the character and form of the built up area. The policy goes on to state that such development contributes

to the economic use of land, avoids pressure on the countryside, and serves to remove the detrimental effect of neglected land in residential areas. However, development should not prejudice either the existing amenity enjoyed by adjacent residents or potential opportunities for redevelopment.

5.0 Review of Main Material Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

5.1 The application seeks planning permission for the residential conversion of the former Bettisfield Methodist Church to a single dwelling. The proposal represents the re-use of an existing building within the established settlement of Bettisfield and will secure a viable long-term use for a building which is no longer required for its original purpose.

5.2 The existing building has been disused for a number of years, with the church having closed its doors for the final time as a place of worship several years ago. Given the length of time the property has remained unused as a place of worship, it can reasonably be concluded there is no demand for the building with its existing D1 use, to be retained.

5.3 The proposal makes efficient use of an existing building and existing infrastructure, avoiding the need for new development on greenfield land. By bringing a vacant building back into beneficial use, the development supports the objectives of Planning Policy Wales and Policy PS2 of the Wrexham UDP, which seek to promote sustainable patterns of development and the efficient use of existing resources.

5.4 Further, in accordance with UDP Policy H2, it is considered the proposal will be a suitable form of residential development within the heart of the settlement at Bettisfield – utilising an existing building to meet housing needs locally, without the need for greenfield land to be developed.

5.5 The development will preserve the existing building and ensure its continued maintenance through a viable residential use. Without an appropriate new use, there is a greater risk that the building would continue to deteriorate over time. Therefore this proposal represents a sustainable form of development that will secure the long-term future of the chapel whilst respecting its existing character and appearance.

5.6 As such, the principle of development is considered acceptable in this instance, in accordance with the requirements of both local and national planning policy and guidance.

Design & Visual Impact

5.7 As demonstrated by the submitted drawings, the proposed conversion has been carefully designed to retain the defining architectural character of the former Methodist Church. The overall scale, footprint, form and appearance of the building will remain largely unchanged, with external alterations limited to those necessary to facilitate the proposed residential use.

5.8 Existing architectural features, including the principal entrance, traditional brickwork and characteristic arched window openings will be retained. A limited number of rooflights and new openings are proposed; however, these have been sensitively positioned to minimise their visual impact whilst providing an acceptable standard of residential accommodation.

5.9 The proposal does not involve any extensions or significant alterations to the existing building and therefore preserves the established character of both the building and the surrounding street scene. It is considered that the development complies with the requirements of UDP Policy GDP1 by respecting the scale, appearance and local distinctiveness of the site and its surroundings.

Loss of Community Facility

5.10 The application proposes the residential conversion of a former Methodist Church which has ceased to operate as a place of worship and is no longer required for its original purpose. The building is currently vacant and, without a viable alternative use, is likely to deteriorate over time. The proposed development will secure a sustainable long-term future for the building, ensuring its continued maintenance and preservation.

5.11 Whilst the proposal results in the loss of the building's former D1 use, it is considered that the benefits of bringing a redundant building back into active use outweigh any harm arising from the change of use. The proposal does not involve the demolition of the building or any significant alterations to its external appearance, thereby retaining an important feature within the village whilst delivering an appropriate and sustainable new use.

Residential Amenity

5.12 The application site is surrounded predominantly by existing residential development and therefore the proposed conversion is considered entirely compatible with the use of the surrounding street scene.

5.13 Given the modest scale of the proposal and the limited external alterations proposed, the development will not result in any unacceptable overlooking, loss of privacy, overshadowing or overbearing impacts upon neighbouring properties. Indeed, no extensions to the existing building are proposed, neither are any large-scale new openings. The proposal will therefore

safeguard the amenities currently enjoyed by residents in accordance with UDP Policy GDP1.

Highway Safety, Access & Parking

5.14 Vehicular access to the application site will continue to be taken from the existing access off Chapel View, with no alterations proposed to the existing access arrangements. Existing off-street parking will also be retained to serve the proposed dwelling.

5.15 As detailed within the Proposed Block Plan (Drawing No: 82616 / GH / 003) the proposal involves the creation of a single dwelling and is therefore expected to generate only a limited number of daily vehicle movements. The existing access and parking arrangements are considered sufficient to accommodate the proposed development without giving rise to highway safety concerns.

5.16 Indeed, compared to the application site's baseline use for D1 purposes (as a place of worship for example), it is considered the proposal will generate significantly less in terms of parking demand, and as such, the proposal will see a betterment in terms of parking provision/demand locally and indeed highway safety more generally.

Ecology & Green Infrastructure

5.17 The application is accompanied by a Green Infrastructure Statement, Biodiversity Enhancement Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment, which assess the ecological value of the site and identify appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. A preliminary inspection was undertaken on 24th June 2026, followed by dusk emergence surveys on 14th July and 5th August 2026.

5.18 No evidence of nesting birds or use of the building by roosting bats was identified during the assessment, and no bats were observed emerging from the building. The surrounding area is suitable for foraging and commuting bats, with three species of bats recorded nearby during the surveys. External lighting will therefore be designed in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidance. If bats or active bird nests are discovered during the works and construction, then work in the affected area will stop and appropriate ecological advice will be obtained.

5.19 The proposal includes Woodcrete bat and bird boxes, together with the retention of the existing building and surrounding vegetation. These measures will provide additional roosting and nesting opportunities for the wildlife and will deliver biodiversity enhancements in line with the small scale of the development. The proposal therefore accords with Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales and UDP Policy GDP1.

Flood Risk and Drainage

5.20 The proposal relates solely to the conversion of an existing building and does not increase the extent of built development within the site. Appropriate foul and surface water drainage will be provided as part of the development, ensuring that there will be no unacceptable impacts in terms of flood risk or drainage.

5.21 Indeed, in terms of surface water drainage, it is confirmed that the current drainage arrangements will remain in-place.

5.22 In terms of foul drainage, similarly, the existing septic tank will be retained for use by the building and its occupants. Given the former D1 use of the building, it is considered that the proposed C3 use (with a single bedroom) will generated less foul flows than the previous situation. As a result, the existing system will provide adequate capacity for the proposed dwelling house.

Overall Planning Balance

5.23 Overall, the proposal represents the sustainable re-use of a redundant former place of worship through its conversion into a single residential dwelling. The development will secure the long-term future of an existing building, preserve its architectural character, provide biodiversity enhancements and make efficient use of existing infrastructure without giving rise to unacceptable impacts upon residential amenity, highway safety or the wider character of the area. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to accord with the relevant provisions of Planning Policy Wales and Policies PS2 and GDP1 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the residential conversion of Bettisfield Methodist Church to a single dwelling, together with all associated works required to facilitate its conversion.

6.2 The proposal will bring a vacant building back into beneficial use whilst retaining the features that contribute to its architectural character. The scheme has been designed to respond sympathetically to its surroundings, requiring only limited external alterations and making use of the existing access and parking arrangements.

6.3 The supporting information submitted with the application demonstrates that the proposal can be accommodated without giving rise to unacceptable impacts to neighbouring amenity, highway safety, ecology or the wider character of the area. The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment found no evidence of the building being used by roosting bats or nesting birds. Subject to sensitive lighting, precautionary working methods and the installation of the

biodiversity enhancements, the development will not harm any protected species and will provide an overall biodiversity benefit.

6.4 Overall, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development that accords with the relevant provisions of Planning Policy Wales, Future Wales and the adopted Wrexham Unitary Development Plan. Accordingly, Wrexham County Borough Council is respectfully requested to grant full planning permission.