

Green Infrastructure 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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1. Policy Background

1.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) supports a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council ("The Local Planning Authority") for the residential conversion of Bettisfield Methodist Church, into a single dwelling and all associated works.

1.2 This GIS aims to respond to the requirements of Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, 2024). This states:

"6.2.11 The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.

6.2.12 A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15) has been applied.

6.2.13 There are multiple ways of incorporating green infrastructure, depending on the needs and opportunities a site presents, and the green infrastructure assessment should be referred to, as appropriate, in order to ascertain local priorities. Landscaping, green roofs, grass verges, sustainable drainage and gardens are examples of individual design measures that can have wider cumulative benefits, particularly in relation to biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems as well as in securing the other desired environmental qualities of places. Wider landscape measures, such as the creation of species rich meadows, woodlands and the improvement of linkages between areas of biodiversity value should be considered for larger scale development. In most cases the green infrastructure statement should highlight any baseline data considered and surveys and assessments undertaken, including but not limited to, habitats and species surveys, arboricultural surveys and assessments, sustainable drainage statements, landscape and ecological management plans, open space assessments and green space provision and active travel links".

1.3 The 'step-wise approach', as outlined below, demonstrates the sequential approach that has been adopted as part of the proposed development to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimised, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. In addition, enhancement has been secured by delivering a net biodiversity benefit on-site, over and above that required to mitigate or compensate for any negative impact.

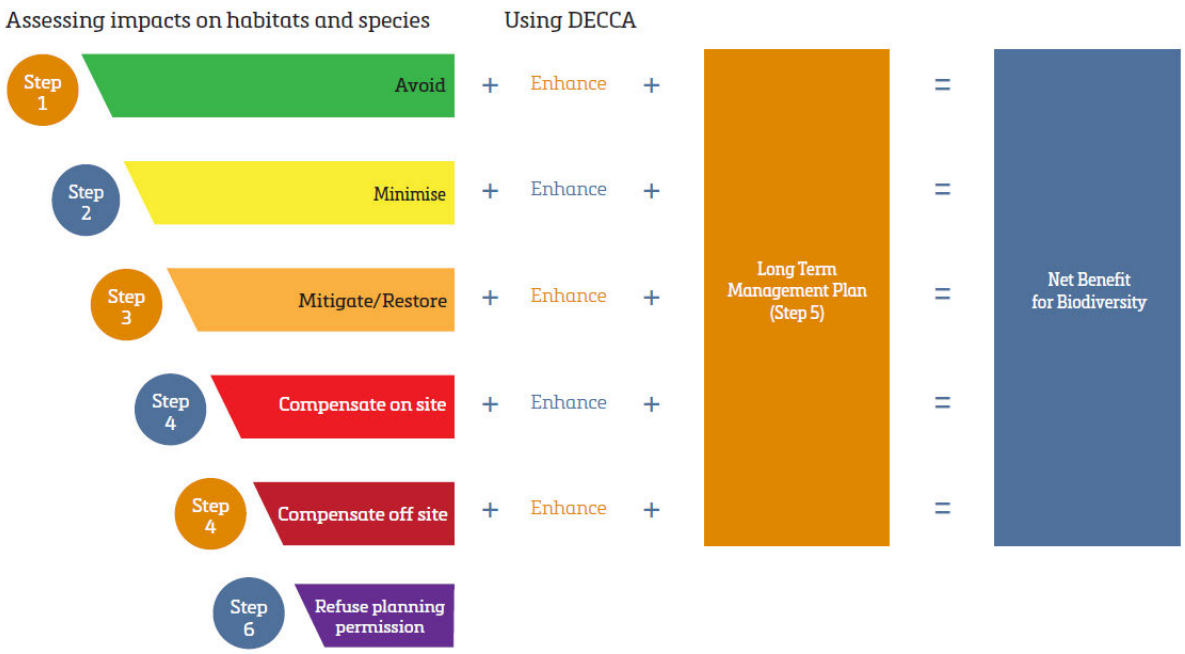


Figure 1: A summary of the step-wise approach taken from Chapter 6 of PPW (Ed. 12, 2024)

2. The Proposed Development

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 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).

2.7 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.

2.8 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.

3. Green Infrastructure Baseline

3.1 The application site comprises the former Methodist Church, associated hardstanding and a small area of managed amenity space within the settlement of Bettisfield. The site is largely developed and contains limited green infrastructure features.

3.2 The chapel is directly surrounded by hardstanding, with existing residential dwellings located beyond the site. The wider area contains established trees, hedgerows, ponds and the nearby canal, which together provide suitable habitat and connectivity for wildlife, including foraging and commuting bats.

3.3 An Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM, dated August 2026, accompanies the planning application. A preliminary inspection of the building was undertaken on 24th June 2026, followed by dusk emergence surveys on 14th July and 5th August 2026. The surveys assessed the potential and actual use of the building by bats and birds.

3.4 No evidence of nesting birds or use of the building by roosting bats was identified, and no bats were observed emerging from the building during either dusk survey. The surrounding area is, however, suitable for foraging and commuting bats, with three bat species recorded during the surveys. No evidence [redacted] other protected species was identified. The Ecological Impact Assessment also confirms that no priority habitat or significant vegetation will be affected by the proposal.

3.5 The nearest designated ecological sites, approximately 1 kilometre east of the application site, include the Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site, Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses National Nature Reserve, and Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses SSSI and SAC. Given the small scale of the development, its location within the existing developed curtilage and its separation from these sites, the Ecological Impact Assessment concludes that no significant effects upon designated sites are anticipated.

3.6 Given the above and the conclusions of the submitted Ecological Assessment, it is deemed the application site has a low green infrastructure baseline as things stand.

4. The Green Infrastructure Strategy

4.1 The proposal has been designed in accordance with the stepwise approach set out in Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales. By re-using an existing building, retaining the existing access arrangements and limiting external alterations, the development avoids unnecessary impacts upon existing green infrastructure.

4.2 Existing vegetation and habitats surrounding the site will be retained, with the proposal confined entirely within the existing developed curtilage. No priority habitat or other important green infrastructure features will be lost as a result of the development.

4.3 Although no evidence of roosting bats was identified, the surrounding area is suitable for foraging and commuting bats. Any new external lighting will therefore be kept to the minimum necessary and designed in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidance. Lighting will be positioned and directed to avoid unnecessary illumination of the proposed bat boxes and surrounding habitats.

4.4 Precautionary measures will be followed during the conversion works. If a bat is discovered, work within the affected area will stop and a licensed bat worker will be contacted for advice. If birds begin constructing a nest within the building, work in that area will stop until the nest is no longer active and any young have left.

4.5 To provide biodiversity enhancements, the development incorporates two Woodcrete bat boxes and one Woodcrete bird box, as shown on the submitted Biodiversity Enhancement Plan. In accordance with the Ecological Impact Assessment, a crevice-dwelling bat box will be positioned on the south-western gable and the bird box on the north-eastern gable. All boxes will be positioned at least 2 metres above ground level. The second bat box represents an additional enhancement beyond the minimum recommendation of the ecologist.

4.6 These measures will provide additional roosting and nesting opportunities and contribute towards delivering a net benefit for biodiversity appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposal.

4.7 Overall, the proposal demonstrates the principles of the stepwise approach by avoiding the loss of existing habitats, minimising potential disturbance through sensitive lighting and precautionary working methods, and providing biodiversity enhancements as part of the completed development.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The proposed conversion has been designed to protect the existing green infrastructure of the site while incorporating appropriate biodiversity enhancements. The development is confined to the existing building and developed curtilage, with no loss of priority habitat, significant vegetation or other important green infrastructure features.

5.2 The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment found no evidence of the building being used by roosting bats or nesting birds and identified no significant ecological constraints to the proposed development. The surrounding area is nevertheless used by foraging and commuting bats, and appropriate measures will therefore be adopted to control external lighting and minimise disturbance during the conversion works.

5.3 The development follows the stepwise approach prescribed by Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales by avoiding ecological impacts in the first instance, minimising and mitigating potential disturbance, and providing bat and bird boxes as additional enhancements.

5.4 It is therefore considered that the proposal will not result in unacceptable impacts upon existing green infrastructure, designated sites or protected species. The proposed enhancements will provide additional roosting and nesting opportunities and deliver a net benefit for biodiversity proportionate to the scale and nature of the development.