

Mr J Northern
Trustee for Baldock Baptist Church
Radwell Bury
Farm East
Baldock
SG7 5ES

Our Ref: 26/00050/PRELB
Contact: Mark Simmons
Direct Line: 01462 474685
Email: mark.simmons@north-herts.gov.uk
Date: 2 March 2026

Dear Jonathan,

Pre-Application Listed Building: Installation of mezzanine floor, secondary glazing, general repairs, and refurbishment.

Methodist Church, Whitehorse Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6QB

Thank you for your application received on **13 January 2026** and validated on the same day. As you may be aware, the target date for a response is the **10 March 2026**.

I acknowledge your architect, Andrew Rayner's email received last Tuesday (24th), and the time spent preparing the visuals for consideration. I also thank you for the Statement of Need received by email the same day and thank you for taking my call last Friday.

CONTEXT

Baldock Methodist Church is grade II listed and was added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on **15 August 1974**. The list entry is described at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1102086?section=official-list-entry>

The building is in the Baldock Conservation Area and the main heritage issues to consider are the impact of the proposals upon the listed building's special character and upon the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area.



HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Internal works - Section 16(2) only is applicable.

External works – Sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) are applicable.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy HE1

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

- **207** (*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*)
- **210** (*desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*),
- **212** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- **213** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- **215** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

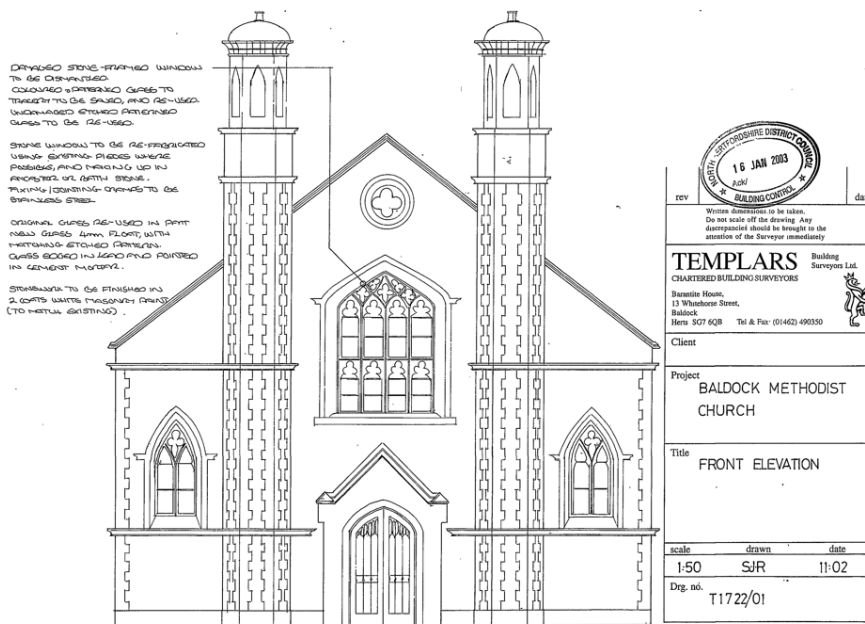
PLANNING HISTORY

It is understood that Baldock Methodist Church welcomed its congregation for the last time on 9 June 2024 after having served as a place of worship and a focal point for the community over the previous 170 years (since 1853).

Prior to closure, the following planning history is noted (excluding general enquiries and works to trees).

1. **80/01863/1** - Erection of single storey rear extension.
CP 31.12.1980
2. **82/00475/1LB** - Application for Listed Building Consent to demolish rear hall and classroom and internal alterations to main building.
CP 20.09.1982
3. **86/01932/1** - Section 53 determination - Use of hall for nursery school for 20 children between 9am and 12 noon every weekday.
RQD 26.11.1986
4. **03/00112/1LB** - Listed Building works
Accepted
5. **17/00835/1LB** - Reconfiguration of existing toilets to form disabled persons wc and baby changing facilities
WNPW (withdrawn not proceeded with)

It is noted that the reason why there is no formal determination against app ref: 03/00112/1LB is that the Ecclesiastical Exemption Order applied (see elevation drawing and correspondence below)



15 January 2003

North Herts District Council
 Building Control
 Council Offices
 Gernon Road
 Letchworth
 Herts

Dear Sirs,

RE: BALDOCK METHODIST CHURCH

Please find attached Application for Listed Building Consent, for works at Baldock Methodist Church.

The main window on the south east gable has deteriorated extensively, as a result of the iron cramps used, to connect pieces of stone, have rusted, and blown the stone apart at the joints. We believe the window is becoming unstable.

Using a stone mason and specialist glaziers, it is proposed to take down the window, saving the coloured glass, and original etched glass, and rebuild the window. The rebuilt window will replicate the original sections and patterns, and where possible original stone will be re-used.

Should you wish to discuss this Application, or meet on site, please contact me at this office.

Yours sincerely,



SJ ROGERS F.R.I.C.S.

Enc

30th January 2003

Mr S Rogers
Templars Building Surveyors Ltd
Baranite House
13 Whitehorse Street
Baldock
Herts
SG7 6QB

Your Ref: T/1722/SJR/PG
Our Ref: VW/03/00112/1LB

Contact Officer: Victoria Woodbridge
Direct Line: 01462 474543

Dear Mr Rogers

Re: Baldock Methodist Church

With reference to your submission of Listed Building Consent for the above site and your subsequent conversation with our Principal Building Conservation Officer, Ms Marten.

I am writing to confirm that the proposed works are exempt from Listed Building Consent because the building has an ecclesiastical use. We have retained 2 copies of the plans, for our reference and because the Council must be consulted on this matter, we have also retained the application form and the Specification documentation for our file. I have enclosed the other 2 copies of the plans.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries regarding this or any other matter, alternatively please contact Ms Marten on 01462 474411 regarding any specific Listed Building matters.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Woodbridge
Technical Support Officer

THE PROPOSAL

Had this building remained a Methodist Church the works would generally have been subject to their highly centralised system of control where the procedures are determined by the relevant provisions in the Model Trusts and Standing Orders, in particular section 98.

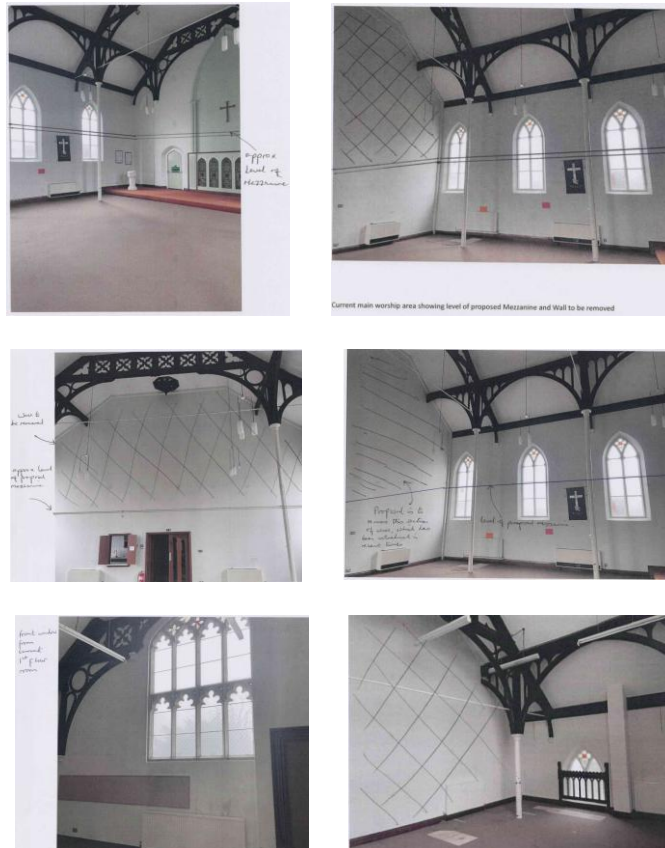
However, whilst being retained as a Place of Worship, I note that the building has been acquired by the Baldock Baptist Church. My understanding is that exemption from secular control applies only to buildings that are held in trust by one of the Baptist trust corporations listed in Schedule 1 to the 2010 Order for a church in membership with either the Baptist Union of Great Britain or the Baptist Union of Wales. My understanding is that there are in addition many Baptist churches, particularly those of the Strict and Particular Baptists, which are not in membership with one of these unions, and are as a result outside the exemption.

Why raise this? Well, this is a paid pre-application inquiry, and I comment below as though matters may require listed building consent. I understand from our telephone conversation last Friday that these proposals are not covered by the Ecclesiastical Exemption and so all matters would be considered under the secular planning and listed building consent process. I respond to the 10 points in the order set out in your supporting statement.

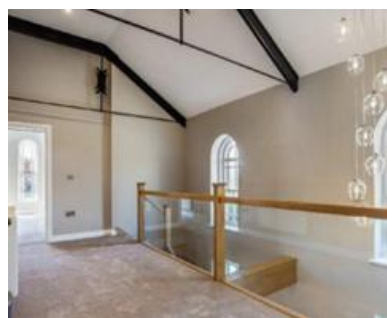
1. Installation of mezzanine floor

I note the proposed floor level for the mezzanine and the intention to remove the blockwork partition wall. The latter would be a significant improvement and as stated, would allow the current roof trusses to remain visible and ensure that the first-floor space created benefits from the natural light afforded from the large front window. I note that the intention would be for the steel structure supporting the mezzanine to be supported by insertions into the side elevation walls with columns resting on new footings below the current internal floor area. My

concern with this approach is how invasive this might be assuming that the walls will be 'punctured' halfway up between each window. If the floor were instead supported off structural columns (may be placed on the outer side of the existing columns) this would enable, if necessary, the first floor to cantilevered out towards but not actually touching the outside walls. This would potentially enable the rhythm provided by the windows to remain uninterrupted. The works described above will require listed building consent.



An example as to how the existing first floor visually 'disects' these ground floor windows is expressed in the image immediately above right. Whilst I understand the desire to maximise first floor space and the need to have borrowed light at this level, in my opinion there may be a better way to handle the interface between the floor and windows without having to resort to the visually heavy balustrade treatment. I encourage consideration of a scheme whereby a mezzanine is constructed on the line of metal columns so that the windows are fully expressed at ground floor or possibly something along the lines of the image below.



Having said that, the visuals provided by your architect are really helpful in understanding the relationship between the floor level and windows and how the internal stairs/lift 'box' addresses the first floor space. It is mildly disappointing that the 'box' stands close up to the right-hand reveal to the gable end window. Is there a way in which the staircase can occupy the corner position with the platform lift may be even placed within the central space with the staircase wrapping around the lift, if this enables the 'box' to be pulled back from the window. A fully DDA compliant scheme is supported but I still question whether setting the floor away from the perimeter walls may be a better solution.



Having said that, I note that Baldock Baptist Church has a Sunday congregation currently numbering around 100 – 110 congregants and runs a Sunday School currently numbering around 40 children. I see that in the Statement of Need, a minimum seating capacity of 170 persons, providing uninterrupted viewing of the raised platform area and baptistry at the front is sought which would not be feasible if wall-to-wall first floor space is not achieved.

2. Ground floor

No objection is raised to providing WC and kitchen facilities along with additional space for Sunday School and other children's activities. This will require listed building consent. If taking the example of the image at the bottom of page 5, maybe a reinforced glass ceiling could be placed between the first floor level and the outer walls/windows, whereby at ground and first floor, the windows can be experienced full height.

3. Installation of secondary glazing

In our telephone conversation last Friday afternoon you requested a steer regarding the windows. I have to say that I have very little contact with secondary glazing companies at the current time. Whilst no objection is raised to the installation of well-detailed secondary glazing and whilst I have seen Selectaglaze's work previously, I see that there are other companies such as the two alternatives below. I confirm that I would not be prepared to support replacement windows (Slimlite glazing or otherwise) unless there was a convincing justification put forward for doing so.

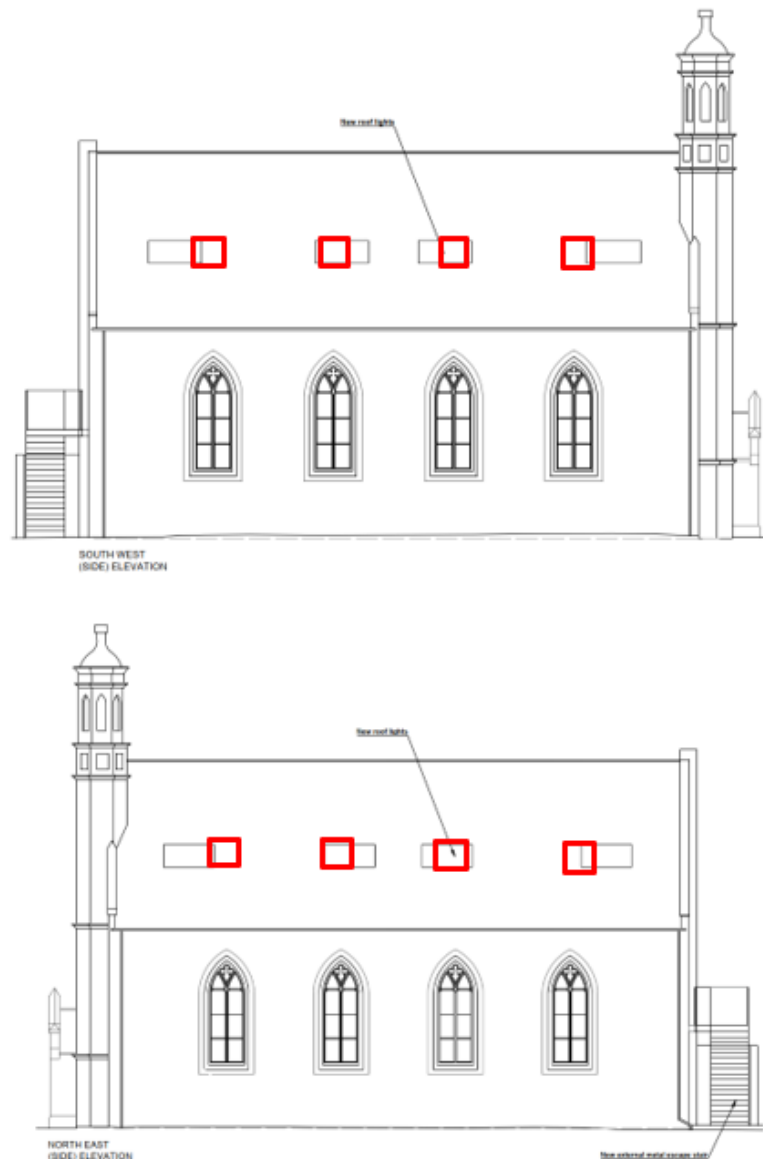
- <https://www.selectaglaze.co.uk/>
- <https://secondaryglazingspecialist.com/>
- <https://www.sashed.com/secondary-glazing-for-period-homesenhance-efficiency-without-compromising-heritage/>

4. Towers on SE elevation

Obtaining a survey is noted and happy to receive a schedule of works which, if considered to be repairs, will not require an application for listed building consent.

5. Roof and roof lights

Obtaining a survey is noted. Proposed roof lights will require listed building consent. The size, number and siting are all important considerations. The roof lights on preliminary drawing nos. MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-022 Rev A and MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-023 Rev A appear relatively large. In my opinion, reducing the width of the roof lights to the width of the ground floor windows below and in line would be preferable and I question whether the roof light on both elevations at the north end would have any impact on services if natural light is directly over the key board/pulpit/baptistery areas. Presumably these would be located above the height of the purlins?



6. Installation of Heat Pump

This will require planning permission and will also require Listed Building Consent if directly fixed to the building. The precise location is an important consideration and no details are provided at this stage to be able to comment further.

7. Resiting gas boiler

In principle this is considered unobjectionable subject to the position of the flue. Once location is known a view can be given as to whether it is de minimis but may require listed building consent. No details are provided at this stage to be able to comment further.

8. Install a wider path and additional paved area outside porch

This will require planning permission and subject to detail may be unobjectionable.

9. Linked glazed reception area

This will require planning permission and listed building consent. The image below refers to this structure possibly incorporating additional toilet facilities thus would not necessarily be fully glazed. This would be located at the front of the listed building and is the most contentious aspect of the current proposal. The proposed reception area (for which no details have been provided) would not only have a significant impact upon the listed building but would also impact upon the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area. It is unlikely that I will be able to support a proposal on heritage grounds.



10. Remove existing pipe organ

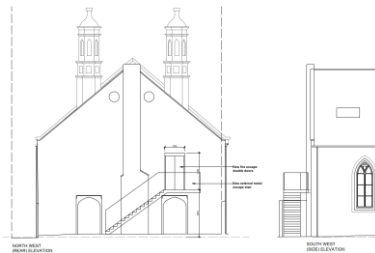
I note the following in the Statement of Need which I find unobjectionable and I welcome the suggestion that a sustainable disposal route is to be sought:

"The proposals would require the removal of Henry Speechly pipe organ, located in the current sanctuary. Whilst regrettable, the removal of the organ can only be considered a neutral factor in the planning balance as it is not an original fixture in BMC, indeed having only been present since 1982/83. Notwithstanding this, the applicant undertakes to seek a sustainable disposal route for the organ – either through a private sale or donation to "Pipe up for Pipe Organs" - a British charity established in 2022 seeking to rehome unwanted British pipe organs."

Additional point 11. External doors at first floor and external fire escape

This point is not addressed in your original submission. The size and location of the new opening is shown on drawing no. MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-013 Rev A. This will require listed building consent and if required under Building/Fire Regulations, then this provides a

convincing justification even though a degree of harm would potentially be occasioned to the listed building. Once a formal submission is received concerns may be raised by adjoining owners, for instance at Aldridge Court to the northwest and any representations received will need to be considered alongside other planning matters. You should consider making your case based on optimum viable use and providing a public benefit by maintaining the current use for the building (paras 213 & 215 NPPF). The same goes for the escape staircase shown on drawing no. MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-023 Rev A. This will require listed building consent and planning permission. Once again, if required under Building/Fire Regulations, then a paragraph 213/215 case would need to be made here as well.



Overall, I consider this to be a well-informed and innovative proposal that generally pays sufficient deference to the special character of this grade II listed church and to the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area. However, I do have concerns, for instance i) the external staircase and first floor entrance doors (may be able to justify this), ii) the 'glazed' front addition which I am currently not prepared to support, iii) the size and position of roof lights and iv) the relationship of the first floor to the windows and perimeter walls. The above is my professional view only and does not prejudice the future determination of any subsequent application(s) submitted to this local planning authority.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

Mark Simmons
BA (Hons), Dip TP, Cert Hist Bldg Cons, MRTPI, IHBC
Senior Conservation Officer

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