

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tabitha Kaye.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01616/FP	Installation of external fire escape stair and fire exit to the rear of the building, installation of rear entrance doors, and installation of no.8 rooflights to the existing slate roof. Modifications to hard landscaping including removal of steps and installation of level access and external paved area, refurbish front gates and replace existing rear/side gate, alterations to existing fenestration, installation of an air source heat pump unit and upgrades to existing external lighting. Installation of a church sign board on posts to front elevation following removal of front elevation yew tree.	Methodist Church Whitehorse Street Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 6QB

Submitted Plan Nos

MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-001_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-002_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-003_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-004_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-005_PL1 MP-BMC-00-DR-A-006_PL1 MP-BMC-01-DR-A-007_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-008_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-009_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-010_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-021_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-022_PL1 MP-BMC-00-DR-A-023_PL1 MP-BMC-00-DR-A-024_PL1 MP-BMC-01-DR-A-025_PL1 MP-BMC-01-DR-A-026_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-027_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-028_PL1 MP-BMC-RP-DR-A-035_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-011_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-019_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-029_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-030_PL1

1.0 Policies

SECN14	Achieving well-designed places
SECN19	Conserving+enhancing natural environment
SECN20	Conserving+enhancing historic environmnt
SECN5	Meeting the challenge of Climate Change
SP9	Design and Sustainability
SP13	Historic environment
D1	Sustainable design
HE1	Designated heritage assets
D3	Protecting living conditions
NE2	Landscape
T2	Parking

NP2 Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall NP

HE4 Archaeology

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

2.1 No relevant site history.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Consultation** – 2no. comments received in objection (nos. 7 and 11 Aldridge Court), and 1no. comment neutral (no. 15 Whitehorse Street). Comments summarised below:

- Loss of privacy to nos. 7 and 11 Aldridge Court as a result of overlooking from the fire escape staircase.

3.2 **Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood** – No comments received.

3.3 **HCC Archaeology** – No objection - subject to archaeological investigation conditions.

3.4 **NHC Conservation** – No objection – subject to signage details condition.

3.5 **NHC Environmental Health** – No objection - subject to external lighting condition and clarification on ASHP.

3.6 **NHC Trees and Landscape** – No objection - subject to mitigation measures being in place to protect the retained trees.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The application site accommodates Baldock Methodist Church, a Grade II Listed Building situated on Whitehorse Street, Baldock. The site is within the Baldock settlement boundary and the Baldock Conservation Area.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Installation of external fire escape stair and fire exit to the rear of the building, installation of rear entrance doors, and installation of no.8 rooflights to the existing slate roof. Modifications to hard landscaping including removal of steps and installation of level access and external paved area, refurbish front gates and replace existing rear/side gate, alterations to existing fenestration, installation of an air source heat pump unit and upgrades to existing external lighting. Installation of a church sign board on posts to front elevation following removal of front elevation yew tree.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- Design and Impact on the Historic Environment;
- Impact on Neighbour Amenity;
- Ecology and Arboriculture;
- Climate Change;
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Design and Impact on the Historic Environment

- 4.3.2 Policies SP9 and D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP), as well as Policy G3 of the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (BBC NP) require development proposals to respond positively to the site's local context. These policies are commensurate with Chapter 14 National Planning Policy Framework 2026 (NPPF).
- 4.3.3 Policies SP13 and HE1 of the NHLP emphasises how permission will be refused where proposals would cause substantial harm or a loss of significance to a Heritage Asset - in this case, the Grade II Listed Methodist Church, and the Baldock Conservation Area. Accordingly, weight will be given to seeking their conservation and management of their setting. Policy G5 of the BBC NP emphasises the importance of conserving or enhancing the character of the Baldock Conservation Area. These policies comply with the LPA's statutory duty under sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are broadly commensurate with Chapter 20 of the NPPF.
- 4.3.4 Policy HE4 of the NHLP outlines that areas of archaeological significance should be safeguarded and an appropriate desk-based assessment should be undertaken, which is commensurate with Policy HE5 of Chapter 20 of the NPPF. As the site is within an archaeologically sensitive area, a pre-commencement condition has been agreed following advice from the Archaeology Officer to ensure that an appropriate assessment is undertaken and implemented if necessary.
- 4.3.5 Alterations to the exterior of the Methodist Church would include the installation of a rear fire escape at first floor level. Steps have been taken to reduce the visual impact of the fire escape, such as finishing the escape staircase in a brick red colour to assimilate with the rear elevation of the Church. The new external doors would be in-

keeping with the character of the Church. The proposed roof lights to both roof slopes would be of a moderate scale. As such, it is considered that the proposed external alterations to the Church would be commensurate with the existing site character and would not have an adverse impact on the character of the Baldock Conservation Area.

- 4.3.6 The NHC Conservation Officer has responded in full to the proposed works to the Grade II Listed Methodist Church (see concurrent Listed Building Consent, 26/01612/LBC), concluding that the works are unobjectionable, with any harm being convincingly justified and outweighed by the public benefit of the Church's ongoing use. The Conservation Officer has not raised any concerns regarding development within the setting of the Listed Building.
- 4.3.7 Comprehensive landscaping is proposed to the front of the Church, including the removal of a mature Yew tree to allow for hard surfacing. Sandstone paving would level the ground to allow for easier pedestrian access from refurbished front gates. The installation of an information board is proposed. The Yew tree contributes positively to the character of the area and its loss is regrettable. However, the justification for removing the Yew tree is adequate and its loss would not detract from the verdant character of the site, which is to be preserved by retaining other existing trees and green spaces. The proposed landscaping works would relate well to the existing layout of the site. A condition has been agreed for details of the proposed information board to ensure that the visual impact of the board is acceptable for the site context. Therefore, these works are acceptable in design terms and would not unacceptably impact the character of the Conservation Area.
- 4.3.8 Overall, the proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies SP9, SP13, D1, HE1 and HE4 of the NHLP, Policies G3 and G5 of the BBC NP, as well as Chapters 14 and 20 of the NPPF 2026.

Impact on Neighbours

- 4.3.9 Policy D3 of the Local Plan permits development which would not harm the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and encourages the use of mitigation measures where necessary. Policy D3 is generally reflected by the provisions of the NPPF.
- 4.3.10 Both neighbour objections were made on the grounds that the fire escape would result in the overlooking of properties within Aldridge Court. The primary purpose of the proposed fire escape staircase would be as a means of escape in an emergency. As use of the staircase would be transitional, any overlooking of these properties within Aldridge Court would be for un-prolonged periods of time. To ensure that the staircase remains as an emergency escape only, the use of the staircase has been secured by condition. Thus, the installation of a fire escape and associated staircase at first floor level would not give rise to neighbour amenity issues and accords with Policy D3 of the NHLP.
- 4.3.11 Environmental Health have stated that the proposed Air Source Heat Pump enclosure would provide adequate noise mitigation. Following Environmental Health's recommendation, the proposed Air Source Heat Pump and enclosure have been

conditioned to be installed in accordance with current regulatory standards to safeguard against noise disturbance to neighbouring residences.

4.3.12 Following Environmental Health's recommendation, a pre-commencement condition has been agreed for the submission of lighting details to ensure that the lighting levels would not cause an amenity issue for neighbouring residences in accordance with Policy D3.

4.3.13 The proposed rear elevation ground floor doors, roof lights, front hardscaping works, gate refurbishment and noticeboard installation are not considered to give rise to any neighbour amenity issues.

Ecology and Arboriculture

4.3.14 Policy NE2 of the NHLP states that proposals should not cause unacceptable harm to the landscape character of the site and locality, taking into account suitable mitigation measures. Policy D1 specifies that proposals should seek to "retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting." Policies NE2 and D1 are commensurate with Chapter 19 of the NPPF.

4.3.15 Existing shrub beds are to be retained and a dwarf hedge planted forward of the principal elevation. While the Trees and Landscape Officer has outlined that removing the Yew tree is regrettable, the LPA would not consider enforcing a TPO on the Yew to avoid removal. A pre-commencement condition has been agreed to ensure that the proposed works do not harm the root protection area of the retained Robinia tree, which makes a positive contribution to the surrounding street and landscape character.

Climate Change

4.3.16 Policy D1 of the NHLP outlines the Council's commitment to supporting climate change mitigation. Policy G4 of the BBC NP reiterates the importance of sustainable design. The proposed development is not large enough in scale to cause significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore complies with Policy D1 of the NHLP, Policy G4 of the BBC NP, and Chapter 5 of the NPPF.

4.3.17 Comprehensive landscaping is proposed to the front of the Church, including the removal of a mature Yew tree to allow for hard surfacing.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

4.3.18 This is a form of development which is exempt from BNG Legislation, defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 due it falling under the scope of the 'de minimis' exemption.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None applicable.

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP);
Archaeological Investigations; Details of Signage; Details of External Lighting.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The method statement must detail safe construction methods for development within the identified root protection zone of the Robinia tree, which is sited forward of the Yew tree (to be removed), as shown on plan no. MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-019. The Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) should align to BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction Recommendations and BS3998:2010 'Recommendations for tree work' as applicable. The works shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the details approved pursuant to this condition.

Reason: To prevent damage to or destruction of the Robinia tree to be retained on the site in the interests of the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality, and to comply with Policy NE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local

Plan 2011 to 2031.

4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the new church sign board at 1:10 scale shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. If acceptable, the Local Planning Authority shall confirm in writing, thereafter, the sign board shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

5. The Air Source Heat Pump and enclosure hereby permitted shall accord with the regulatory noise standards relevant at the time of installation.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of any external lighting to be installed on the site, including the design of the lighting unit, any supporting structure and the extent of the area to be illuminated, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Only the details thereby approved shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

7. (A) No development shall commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:
 1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
 2. The programme for post investigation assessment
 3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
 4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
 5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
 6. Provision to be made for public outreach and interpretation
 7. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

(B) The development will be completed in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A).

(C) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set

out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

Reason: The site lies within an area where there is significant potential for archaeological remains and any finds should be retrieved and/or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed as a result of the development hereby permitted in accordance with Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

8. The external fire escape staircase hereby permitted shall only be used as an emergency means of escape, with the door to the staircase being closed at all times except when being used in the case of an emergency; and shall not be used at any other time as a general means of access, balcony, sitting out area, or for any other amenity purpose.

Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices
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<i>S. Kasparian</i> Sarah Kasparian Determining Officer	Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 13 October 2026	