

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

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

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01612/LBC	Internal re-modelling and refurbishment including demolition of 1980s insertions, installation of a first floor throughout the building, installation of stairs and platform lift to first floor, installation of W.C., provision of external fire escape stair and fire exit to the rear of the building, alterations to existing fenestration including secondary glazing, and installation of no.8 rooflights to the slated roof. Removal of yew tree to front elevation and installation of sign board to front elevation.	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-011_PL1 MP-BMC-00-DR-A-012_PL1 MP-BMC-01-DR-A-013_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-014_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-015_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-016_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-029_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-

030_PL1 MP-BMC-ZZ-DR-A-028_PL1 MP-BMC-RP-DR-A-035_PL1 MP-BMC-RC-DR-A-041_PL1 MP-BMC-00-DR-A-050_PL1 MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-020_PL1

1.0 Policies

SECN20 Conserving+enhancing historic environmnt

HE1 Designated heritage assets

2.0 Relevant Site History

2.1 **17/00835/1LB:** Reconfiguration of existing toilets to form disabled persons WC and baby changing facilities. **Withdrawn.**

2.2 **82/00475/1LB:** Application for Listed Building Consent to demolish rear hall and classroom and internal alterations to main building. **Conditional Consent.**

3.0 Representations

3.1 **NHC Conservation Officer** – No objection, subject to conditions on refurbishment of the metal gate, and details of fire escape double doors, external louvres, and roof lights.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The application site accommodates the Baldock Methodist Church, situated on Whitehorse Street, Baldock. The Church is a Grade II Listed Building (Historic England LEN: 1102086) and is situated within the Baldock Conservation Area.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 The application seeks Listed Building Consent for internal re-modelling and refurbishment including demolition of 1980s insertions, installation of a first floor throughout the building, installation of stairs and platform lift to first floor, installation of W.C., provision of external fire escape stair and fire exit to the rear of the building, alterations to existing fenestration including secondary glazing, and installation of no.8 rooflights to the slated roof.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issue in this case is the proposed developments impact upon the character and appearance of the designated heritage assets.
- 4.3.2 The following comments were received from the NHC Conservation Officer on 17th September 2026:

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS

I previously commented under ref: 26/00050/PRELB on 2 March 2026 separating my comments under the following headings:

1. Installation of mezzanine floor
2. Ground floor
3. Installation of secondary glazing
4. Towers on SE elevation
5. Roof and roof lights
6. Installation of Heat Pump
7. Re-siting gas boiler
8. Install a wider path and additional paved area outside porch
9. Linked glazed reception area
10. Remove existing pipe organ
11. External doors at first floor and external fire escape

I considered the pre-app 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 expressed concerns regarding: 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 proposal is not covered by the Ecclesiastical Exemption and so all matters are considered under the secular planning and listed building consent process. The key heritage issues are to consider the impact of the proposal upon:

- The special character of this listed building,
- The character and appearance of the BCA.

An exceptionally robust and comprehensive justification has been provided by way of the submitted Design and Access Statement. As stated in the DAS the internal works will include provision of:

- Insertion of a wall to wall first floor
- A large, dedicated place of worship on the new first floor
- New stair and platform lift access to first floor
- A spacious entrance foyer
- An accessible WC and baby change
- Adequate toilet facilities
- A kitchen
- A small hall
- Two small classrooms, one of which is to double as a vestry and meeting room
- Upgrades to the fire strategy, accessibility, lighting and acoustics

Whilst the external works are described as minimal in scope and include:

- A first-floor fire escape door with metal emergency exit stair to the rear
- Creation of level access by removal of steps
- Improvements to the front yard area including the resurfacing of existing pathways and a modest increase in the paved area immediately in front of the church building - necessary to prevent overcrowding outside the church before and after main worship services
- Removal of the yew tree (Fig. 03) as this is presently having a harmful impact on the appreciation of the church's principal elevation and also to enable the proposed modest increase in the paved area in front of the church
- Installation of a new church signboard
- Upgraded lighting

At page 12 of the DAS, it is noted that the main identified hindrances within BMC which would need to be overcome to achieve the requirements above are:

- The solid internal wall from floor to roof height, which has split the building into two parts, with only very minimal linkage between
- The very large, central window on the front elevation which is presently blocked from the main worship sanctuary and only provides light to the first floor meeting room
- The lack of step free access to the current first floor area
- The present ill proportioned, poorly naturally lit and unattractive worship sanctuary, with a seating capacity of only around 100 persons
- The present lack of ancillary floorspace for use as teaching spaces for Sunday School work and other smaller meetings
- Given the significant degree of harm caused to the historic fabric and special character of BMC by the 1982/83 scheme, the principal point of historical interest now lies in the very large and impressive biaxial timber roof trusses. At present, the roof structure is under appreciated due to the ill proportioned and poorly lit worship sanctuary.

Moving forward, it is section 4.3 of the DAS which is of most interest in that this seeks to address where possible matters raised in my pre-app response. The DAS says that “the scheme has been revised and informed by the pre-application advice received. Each point raised has been considered in relation to the building’s significance, functionality, and the need to secure its viable long-term use. Some of the concerns noted have been dealt with by alterations/clarifications to the proposals”.

At pre-app I said that “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”.

The DAS says that “The proposed vestibule has been slightly reduced in size to enable a larger stand-off between this and the right-hand reveal of the gable end window”. The larger stand-off is not that significant as noted in the drawing extract below but is considered sufficient not to pursue this matter further.

At pre-app, I intimated that 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 encouraged 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.

I note that drawings have been updated to show indicative frameless glass balustrades over all first-floor windows on the side elevations with the floor construction up to the internal face of the windows reveals. Whilst disappointing to see the side windows visually severed, the glass balustrades at first floor with secondary glazing below the chamfered floor detail at ground floor is considered an acceptable compromise.

This point is also referred to at page 37 of the HS:

“The structural beams supporting the new floor are set back approximately 400mm from the perimeter walls. This arrangement creates a chamfered underside to the floor edge where it approaches the windows, reducing the visual impact of the floor structure and preventing an abrupt intersection with the window openings.”

At pre-app I said that reducing the width of the roof lights to the width of the ground floor windows below and in line would be preferable and I questioned whether the roof light on both elevations at the north end would have any impact on services if natural light were directly over the keyboard/pulpit/baptistery areas.

Whilst noting that eight new roof lights have been proposed to provide natural daylight to the proposed worship space on the first floor where existing daylight is limited, they are reduced in size and their position slightly adjusted in line with pre-app advice and this ensures that “they are discreet to the external roof silhouette”. I agree that the approach ensures that roof alterations are minimal and visually restrained.

I note that there two essential needs which are required to deliver the intended use of this building.

- The essential need for an external first floor fire exit and external fire escape staircase, and
- The essential need for the first-floor worship sanctuary to be wall to wall.

On the first of these matters the DAS states:

“The proposed external fire escape staircase and associated external fire exit are required to provide safe and compliant emergency egress from the first-floor accommodation. The external solution represents the only viable option for achieving a safe evacuation route in a way which wouldn’t render the configurations of the first floor and ground floor inadequate and unable to provide for the main essential needs of Baldock Baptist Church, as set out in the Statement of Need.”

The DAS goes on to say (my highlighting in bold):

“Its design minimises its visual and physical impact on the host building. Interference with principal and significant architectural features elevations is avoided and is conceived as a lightweight, recessive intervention. While it inevitably introduces a degree of change to the building’s external appearance, **this is considered to result in less than substantial harm which is necessary to facilitate safe continued use.**”

Since the DAS was written the latest version of the NPPF has been published and para 2c of Policy HE5 is relevant here in that some harm is identified to the significance of the heritage asset. It is considered that the degree of harm is modest to low and para 4 of Policy HE6 goes on to say:

4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits

can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

This is clearly a case of securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building and which in my view outweighs the harm identified.

On the second of these matters, I note the case put forward for the first floor to be wall to wall particularly seeking to provide the 170 seats referred to in the Statement of Need and I have commented above on the balustrade detail. I note that a wall to wall first floor is essential to prevent noise interference between the ground floor and the first floor. Importantly, the new floor will terminate at the wall line rather than extending into the window openings, leaving the windows clear of interference by the works. I concur with the justification in the DAS that:

“The intersection of the first floor and windows is a necessary compromise to achieve the project’s feasibility. This solution balances the sensitive preservation of the church’s heritage with the practical necessity of creating a large, functional, and sustainable space for the congregation with acoustic separation between the floors.”

One matter not addressed at pre-app is the proposed scissor-truss as noted in the 3D visual below. There is a clear explanation at page 38 of the submitted HS under the sub-heading ‘Wall Tie Rods and Structural Stabilisation’. Whilst the scissor truss would result in a mild visual interruption of the hall space this would not be to the extent that would occasion harm or merit an objection and is set in the context of existing wall ties. For it is noted that the church has experienced historic lateral movement of the perimeter walls, resulting in measurable wall spreading.

CONCLUSION

At page 23 of the submitted Heritage Statement it states:

“The church should therefore be understood as a multi-phase historic building whose significance is derived from a combination of built fabric, form, setting and use.”

I concur with the commentaries in the Heritage Statement relating to Architectural Interest, Historic Interest, Townscape Significance, Communal and Associative Value, Evidential Value Contribution of the Interior and Effects of Later Alterations. I also concur with the assessment of significance. I also agree with what is written at page 36 that in heritage terms, the removal of certain interior elements “are not considered to result in substantial loss of high-significance historic fabric. On the contrary, they would remove elements of later intervention that have already disrupted aspects of the building’s original internal coherence and visual legibility. Their removal therefore has the potential to result in a limited degree of heritage benefit, or at least to offset part of the harm associated with the new intervention”.

This proposal is clearly set out and well-articulated and there is no need to seek amendments. I agree with page 55 of the submitted HS that any harms identified have been clearly and convincingly justified and are outweighed by the range of public benefits identified (which are covered more comprehensively at pages 58 & 59 of the HS). Subject to conditions, I find this proposal **UNOBJECTIONABLE**.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The works accord with the requirements of Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and Chapter 20 of the NPPF. The works also accord with Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) act 1990. Grant listed building consent.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 N/A

4.6 **Pre-commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 Details of fire escape double doors, external louvres, and roof lights.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That listed building consent be **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Prior to the commencement of the works hereby approved, details of the new fire escape double doors shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. If acceptable, the Local Planning Authority shall confirm in writing, thereafter, the fire escape doors 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 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

3. Prior to the commencement of the works hereby approved, Details of the roof lights shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. If acceptable, the Local Planning Authority shall confirm in writing, thereafter, the roof lights shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

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 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

4. Prior to the commencement of the works hereby permitted, details (including colour) of all new external louvres shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. If acceptable, the Local Planning Authority shall confirm in writing, thereafter, the louvres 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 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

5. The metal entrance gates and associated railings shall be retained in-situ and refurbished as noted on approved drawing no. MP-BMC-XX-DR-A-022 Rev PL1 unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest of these curtilage-listed items and by doing so protecting the significance of the principal heritage asset under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

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