

Application Number: F/YR13/0649/F

Minor

Parish/Ward: Whittlesey Town Council/Benwick, Coates and Eastrea

Date Received: 29 August 2013

Expiry Date: 24 October 2013

Applicant: Mr N Tuckey, Blinds In Harmony Ltd

Agent: Mr Stephen Hodson, Hodsons

Proposal: Change of use of church to workroom and offices

Location: The Methodist Church, North Green, Coates, Whittlesey.

Reason before Committee: This application is before committee due to a member call in by Cllr Butcher given that there are limitations to what this building can be used for, and if it is not put to some suitable use it will fall into disrepair and become an eyesore and problem to the Village and District.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of church to workroom and offices (B1) at The Methodist Church, North Green, Coates, Whittlesey. The proposed use involves the manufacturing of curtains, vertical and roller blinds. The site features a very prominent and distinct church in the middle of North Green in Coates. This prominent building is located within the Conservation Area and is identified as a Building of Local Interest.

The key issues to consider with regards this application include –

- Principle and Policy Implications;
- Use, Layout and Impact upon Amenity;
- Access and Parking Provision;
- Impact upon Heritage Asset;
- Other Matters.

The church building and the green setting characterises the area and makes a significant and positive contribution to local distinctiveness and character of the village. Historically, and continuing to the present day the building, it's setting and green area represent an important space which enhances the local village. It is considered that the introduction of the proposed use and likely associated activities would be detrimental to the historic environment/character of the area.

The potential re-use of the building along with the economic and employment benefits of the proposal are noted however taking all of the above into account, it is considered that the adverse impact upon the character and setting of this important open space which makes a significant contribution to the village, both historically and in the present day, would outweigh the benefits of the scheme. Therefore, the proposal fails to comply with local and national planning policies and as such it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

2. HISTORY

Of relevance to this proposal is:

- 2.1 F/YR13/0364/F – Change of use of church to workshop and offices – Refused 19/07/2013

3. PLANNING POLICIES

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraph 2: Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan.

Paragraph 14: Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 17: Seek to ensure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants.

Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

3.2 Emerging Fenland Local Plan - Core Strategy (Sept 2013):

CS3: Spatial Strategy, The Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside.

CS6: Employment

CS12: Rural Areas Development Policy

CS15: Sustainable Transport Network

CS16: High Quality Environments

CS18: The Historic Environment

3.3 Fenland District Wide Local Plan (1993):

E2: Important Landscape and Townscape Features

E8: Landscape and Amenity Protection

E9: Alteration and Extension to existing buildings

E12: Development within Conservation Area

TR3: Parking Standards

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 *Town Council*

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

4.2 *Conservation Officer*

No comments received at time of report - Full update at meeting

4.3 *CCC Highways*

Requested Further Details. Details have been provided. Additional comments are awaited from CCC Highways. A full update will be provided at the Planning Committee Meeting.

4.4 **CCC Archaeology**

Concerned that as the chapel is an early non-conformist chapel there may be internal burials associated with the former part of the 19th century (prior to communal burial practices). As the change of use/alterations involve removal of the existing floor and replacement with concrete if burials are present this floor replacement may disturb these. We would ask that the chapel should be researched prior to consent (should it be granted) in order to ascertain if burials are present within the confines of the building.

Applicant has provided further information. Additional comments from CCC Archaeology have been requested. A full update will be provided at the Planning Committee Meeting.

4.5 **Middle Level Commissioners**

Will not be commenting on this application

4.6 **FDC Environmental Protection**

No objections

4.7 **Local Residents**

2 x letters of objection with concerns raised including;

- Traffic and Parking;
- Unloading and servicing;
- Close to children's play area parking hazard;
- Should not be a commercial use;
- 'Coates has a wonderful green which is the pride of this village. We the people of Coates do not want this workshop'.

1 x letter of support outlining;

- Pleased this building of Historical Value will be kept to a modern use when it's no longer required as a place of worship.

5. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

5.1 The site features a very prominent and distinct church in the middle of North Green in Coates. This prominent building is located within the Conservation Area and is identified as a Building of Local Interest. The church is built of cream brick, with a gable dentil design of contrasting purple and red bricks, arched brick and stone lintels to front elevation, with hipped porch, slate roof, with contemporaneous iron railing around the building which appears to date back to late 19th Century. The building is surrounded by designated public open space with a children's playground to the North West of the site.

6. **PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

6.1 The key issues to consider with regards this application include –

- Principle and Policy Implications;
- Use, Layout and Impact upon Amenity;
- Access and Parking Provision;

- Impact upon Heritage Asset;
- Other Matters.

6.2 Principle and Policy Implications:

The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and at its heart is the presumption in favour of sustainable development and core planning principles. It seeks to ensure that planning supports sustainable economic development whilst taking account of the different roles and character of different areas and conserving heritage assets

Local and National policy seek to support business and employment opportunities however Policy EMP6 of the Local Plan outlines that proposals for new industrial, commercial or business uses will not normally be allowed in areas where this gives rise to serious environmental or highway problems, particularly where such use constitutes a non-conforming use. Furthermore, Local Policies such as Policy E8 of the Local Plan and Policy CS16 of the emerging Core Strategy reflect those within the NPPF by seeking to ensure that when considering proposals for new development issues including the scale, style, character, appearance, amenity and access and parking are taken into consideration. Policy E2 sets out that planning permission will not normally be granted for development of open spaces which are an important part of the settlements character.

The site to which this application relates to is identified as a Building of Local Interest. Given its status as a non-designated heritage asset, local and national policies in relation to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are central to the assessment of this application. Before, assessing the proposal in terms of layout, design, access, parking etc. it is necessary to assess the principle of the proposal in this location.

Section 12 of the NPPF is specifically concerned with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It requires Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset to give great weight to the assets conservation. Para 132 of the NPPF is clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets and the more important the asset the greater the weight should be given. It goes on to say that *significance can be harmed or lost through development in its setting* and clear and convincing justification is required for that harm or loss. Furthermore, paragraph 135 of the NPPF outlines that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Policy CS3 of the Emerging Core Strategy identifies Coates as a 'limited growth village'. In these settlements, a small amount of service provision will be encouraged and considered on its merits in order to support the continued sustainability of these villages. Under this policy new development will need to satisfy the applicable thresholds set out in Policy CS3, as well as all of the criteria set out in Policies CS6, CS12, CS15 and CS16.

6.3 Use, Layout and Impact upon Amenity;

The proposal involves the introduction of a B1 use and likely associated activities into a building which has previously functioned as a church. There is concern whether the proposed use would be compatible with the area and historical layout which comprises the church and a large green/open space overlooked and surrounded by residential properties.

It is noted that there will be no external alterations however as outlined above careful consideration is required to ensure the associated paraphernalia such as parking would not alter existing setting, character and activities of the area.

In terms of impact upon amenity of neighbouring properties there are no properties which physically adjoin the site and it is considered that the proposed use would not have a significant direct impact upon the residential amenity of surrounding properties. However there are concerns with regard to the potential harm upon the area as a result of the activities, movements and associated requirements of this business use. The impact of the proposed use upon the strong character and setting of the green and area is discussed below in sections 6.4 and 6.5 of this report.

It is acknowledged that the building and site subject of this application, by virtue of its form, layout, setting and relationship with the surrounding area presents a challenge to find an acceptable and compatible use of this building.

The applicants agent has outlined that the property is technically in planning use 'D1 - Non residential institutions', which amongst other things could be used for a crèche, health centre, day nursery, non-residential education and training centre, museum, public library or public hall.

These potential uses are acknowledged as potentially having a similar if not greater impact on parking demand than the proposed change of use; however the impacts and periods of demand (e.g. parking) would be different.

Many of the uses which would be permitted under Class D1 would be uses which primarily serve a public or community function. The continued use of the building for such a public or local function although in some cases would have more of an impact would be a more appropriate use that would preserve and enhance the green setting which characterises the area and makes a significant and positive contribution to the setting of the Church and to the local distinctiveness and character of the village.

6.4 Access and Parking Provision;

Concerns have been raised by both Neighbours and CCC Highways regard to the proposed use and parking and highway safety issues.

From the details provided the site has no provision for parking or servicing; accordingly all such demand which arises from the proposed change of use must be met either on the public highway or the village green.

CCC Highways have raised concern with regards parking demand and provision for employees, visitors and commercial deliveries and in the absence of such details requested further information.

In terms of parking provision the applicant has indicated that *'there is unrestricted parking on the tarmac road around North Green which is a public highway. A 1.2m or thereabouts footpath leads from the west side of the grassed area of North Green to the property. The occasional delivery will be parked on North Green Road and materials will be carried to the property as individual rolls of fabric etc are not heavy'*.

The applicant has also indicated that at present the company is a family business with Mr and Mrs Tuckey their two sons and another person with all but one living in the village moments from the property and 'likely to walk to work'

CCC Highways note in the Agents statement, that the site could be utilised by other uses within the permitted development Use Class which could have a similar if not greater parking demand than the proposed change of use, albeit the periods of demand may differ.

However, the material difference for the use of the site as a workshop and offices is likely to be that of servicing; the statement refers very briefly to this element indicating an 'occasional delivery vehicle' will visit the site, but no further details were provided.

CCC Highways sought further clarification in relation to the nature, length and weight of all vehicles visiting the site associated with material delivery/ collection/ servicing etc, together with the daily/ weekly frequency.

In response to this request the applicant has provided the following details;

"There are 5 main delivery couriers.

- Night Freight have 7.5 tonne vehicles.*
- City Link, TNT and DPD all have Transit vehicles at 3 tonnes.*
- Tufnell's have 3 and 7.5 tonne vehicles.*

There are on average 6 deliveries a week.

Our own VW vehicles are usually loaded between 8.30 and 9.30.am They are a VW Transporter (3 tonne) and a VW Caddy (a small van). No vehicles will be parked on the green overnight".

At present the applicant has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed use satisfies the highways, access and parking provision requirements and as the proposal is considered contrary to Policy E8 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan 1993 and Policies CS15 and CS16 of the emerging Fenland Local Plan - Core Strategy (Feb 2013).

The amended details have been forward to CCC Highways and a response is awaited. A full update will be given to members at Planning Committee.

6.5 Impact upon Heritage Asset:

All development proposals that would affect any designated or undesignated heritage asset are required to be assessed in line with Policy CS18 of the emerging Core Strategy and the NPPF.

The submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS) which forms part of the planning application has not provided a justification with regards the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset.

The information provided with regards access and parking provision for the proposed use is noted (and discussed under section 6.4), and such servicing arrangements and activities would alter the character and appearance of the area in the immediate vicinity of the building. Furthermore, it is noted that the NPPF states that the significance of a heritage asset can be '*harmed or lost through development within its setting*'.

A key feature of the form and character of the area as set out in the Fenland District Wide Local Plan is the '*village is centered around the North and South Greens which are bisected by the A605. This form gives an open and rural feel to the village. Mature trees, cenotaph, church and play areas all contribute to the Greens' character*'. It goes on to outline that '*both North and South Green lie within a designated Conservation Area which contains some 7 listed buildings. Access across the Green, north and south, is restricted since any increase in the volume of traffic will be detrimental to the character of the green which is an important feature in the Conservation Area*'.

The church building and the green setting characterises the area and makes a significant and positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the village. Historically, and continuing to the present day the building, it's setting and surrounding green represent an important space which enhances the setting and character of the local village. It is considered that the introduction of the proposed use and likely associated activities would not enhance the historic environment or character of the area.

Therefore, it is considered that the principle of the proposal would not be compatible with the building, its setting and area and would result in an unacceptable use in such location which would cause harm to a local heritage asset and alter the character and appearance of this important space. As a result the proposal cannot satisfy all the criteria of Policies CS16 and CS18 of the emerging Core Strategy and is at odds with Policy E2 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan (1993) and specific policies contained within the NPPF which relate to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Consequently the proposal must be considered at odds with local and national policy.

Comments from the Conservation Officer have not been received at the time of report writing. A full update will be given to members at Planning Committee.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The potential re-use of the building along with the economic and employment benefits of the proposal are noted however taking all of the above into account, it is considered that the adverse impact upon the character and setting of this important open space which plays a significant role in the historic and current character of Coates would outweigh the benefits. Therefore, the proposal fails to comply with local and national planning policies and as such it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

- 1 The proposed use of this identified 'Building of Local Interest' would, by virtue of its use, activities, location and setting result in an incompatible and unacceptable form of development which would cause harm to a local heritage asset. This would significantly alter the character and appearance of this important space that makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area. Therefore, the proposal cannot satisfy all the criteria of Policies E2, E8 and EMP6 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan 1993, Policies CS12, CS16 and CS18 of the emerging Fenland Local Plan - Core Strategy (Feb 2013), and is at odds with specific policies contained within Section 12 of the NPPF which relate to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.**
- 2 The proposal has not demonstrated that the proposed use satisfies the highways, access and parking provision requirements and as such would be contrary to Policy E8 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan 1993 and Policies CS15 and CS16 of the emerging Fenland Local Plan - Core Strategy (Feb 2013).**



Created on: 04/09/2013

© Crown Copyright and database rights 2013 Ordnance Survey 10023778

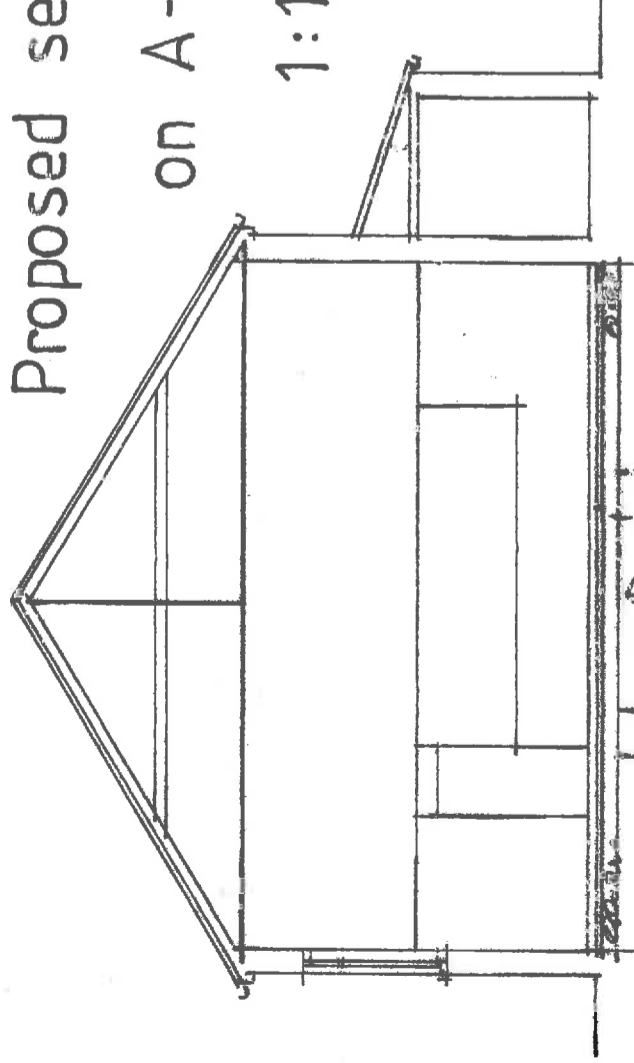
F/YR13/0649/F
Scale = 1:1,250



Proposed section

ON A-A

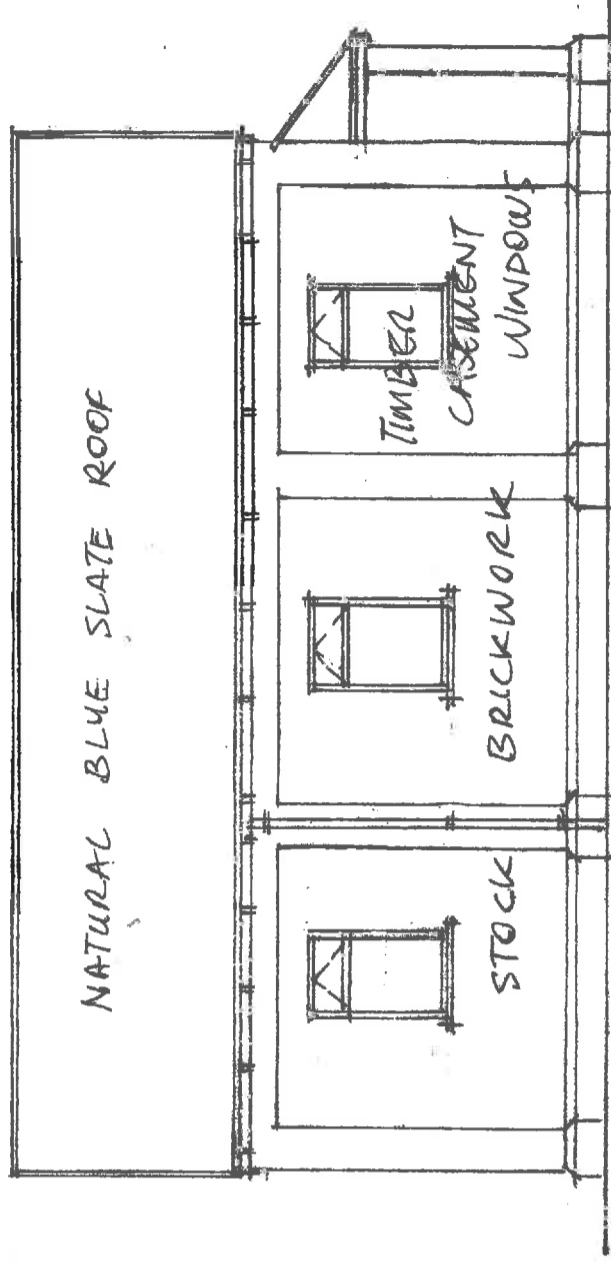
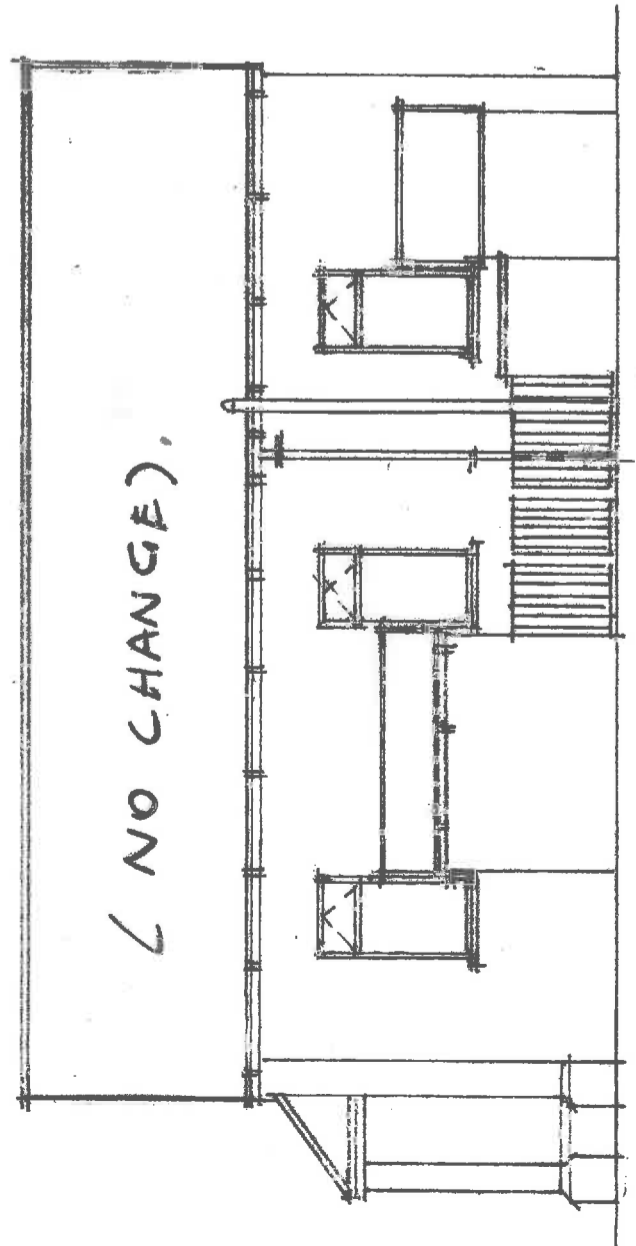
1:100



NEW FLOOR; REMOVE TIMBER BOARD/JOISTS, TREAT
 SUBSOIL WITH ANTI DRY ROT FLUID, COMPACT
 SUBSOIL, PLACE 150MM CRUSHED STONE
 HARD CORE, LAY 1000 GAUGE POLYTHENE DAMP
 PROOF MEMBRANE, 55 MM 'CELOTEX' P.I.R INSULATION
 FOAM, CODE GA40SS, INCLUDE 20MM P.I.R
 FOAM UPSTAND. LAY POLYTHENE VAPOUR
 CONTROL BARRIER, FINISH WITH 100MM CONCRETE
 FLOOR, POWER FLOOR

East side elevation 1:100

(NO CHANGE)

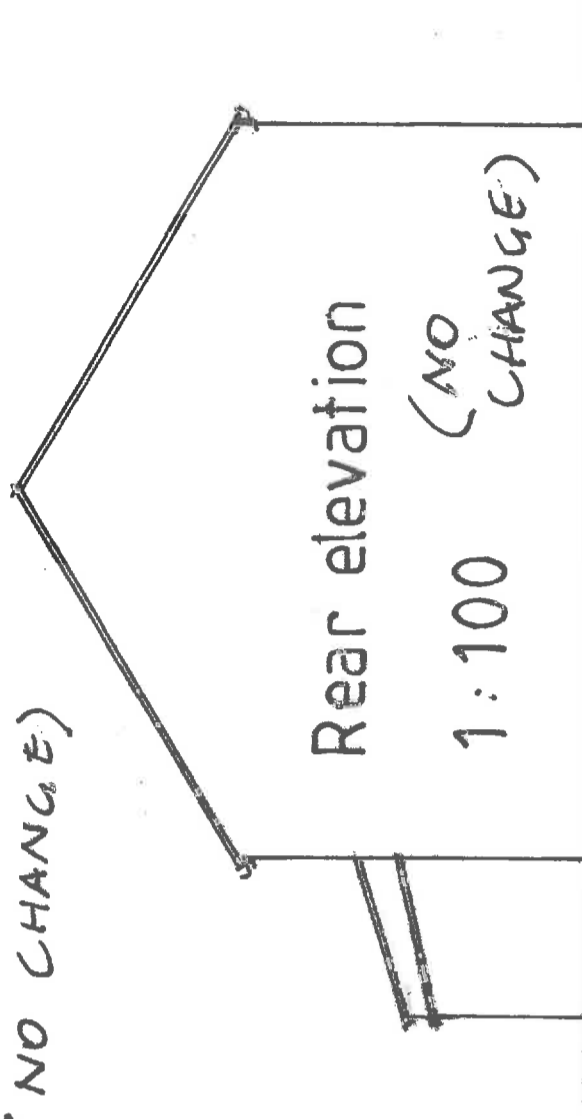


West side elevation 1:100

(NO CHANGE)

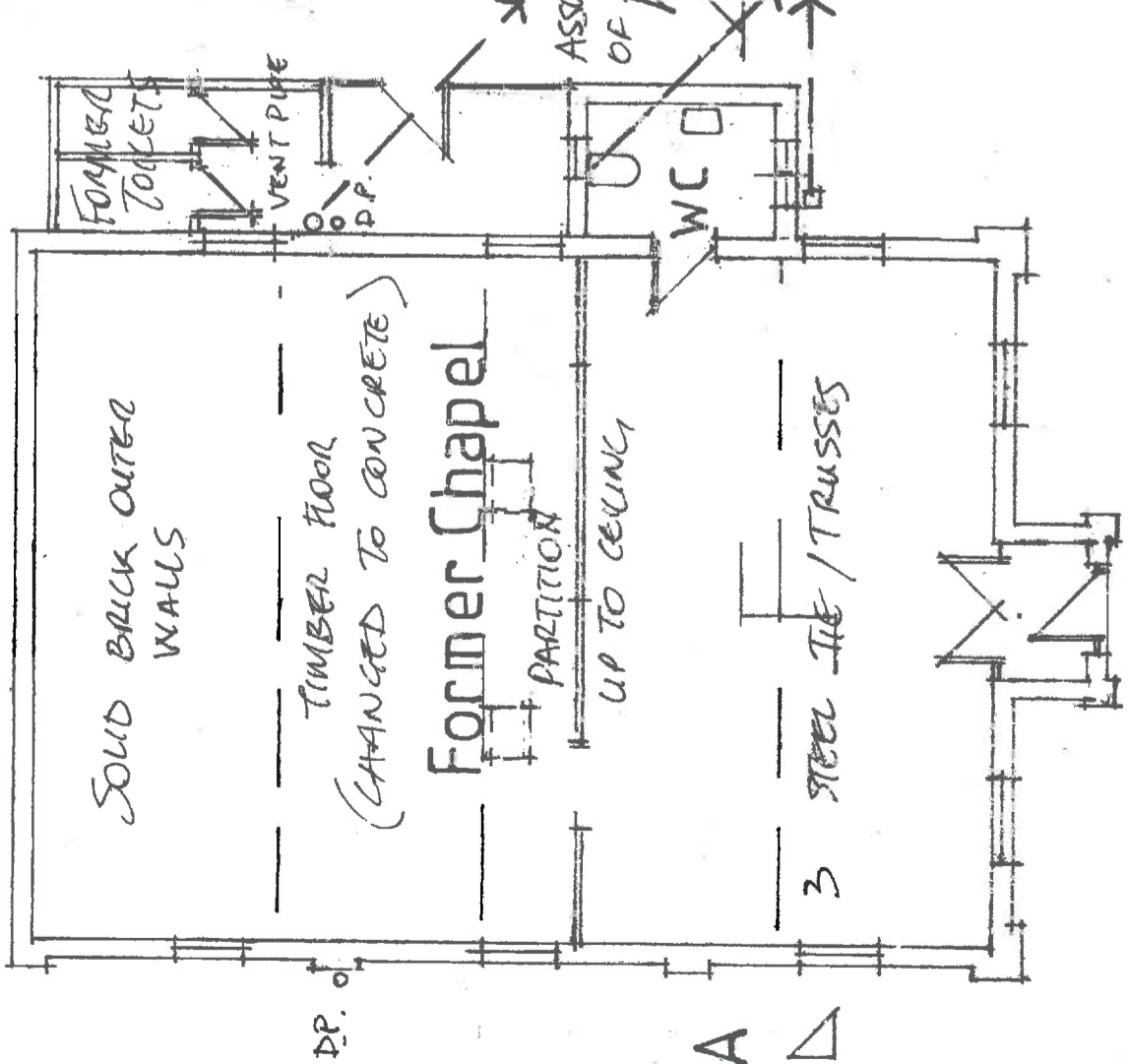
Rear elevation

1:100 (NO CHANGE)

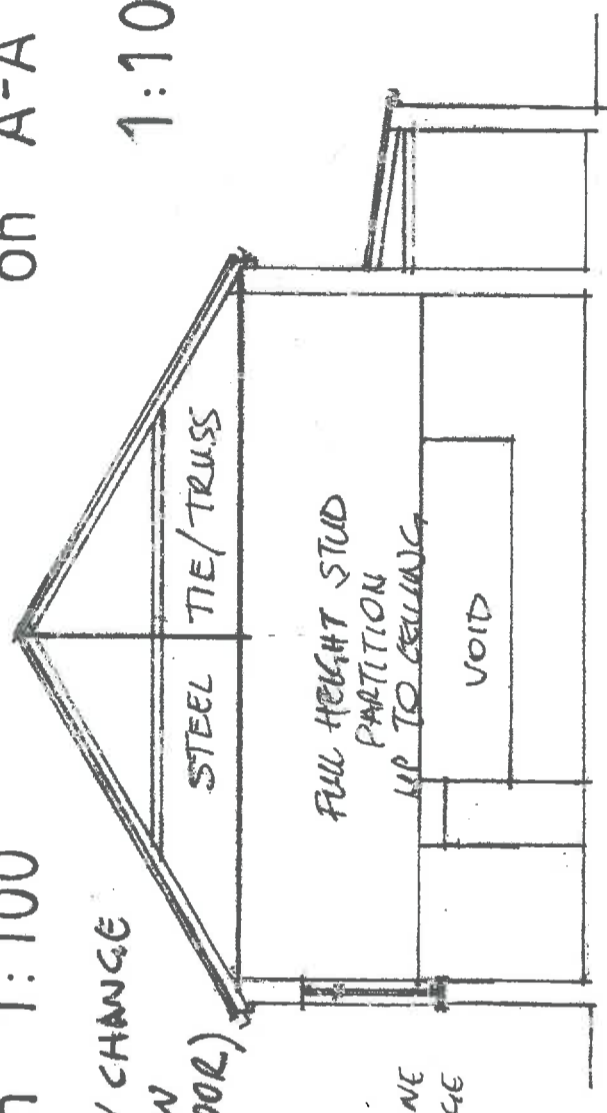


PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER
 CHAPEL AT NORTH GREEN, COATES
 PETERBOROUGH.
 HODSONS, CHARTERED SURVEYORS
 WHITTLESEY. PLAN NO 7860 2 OF 2

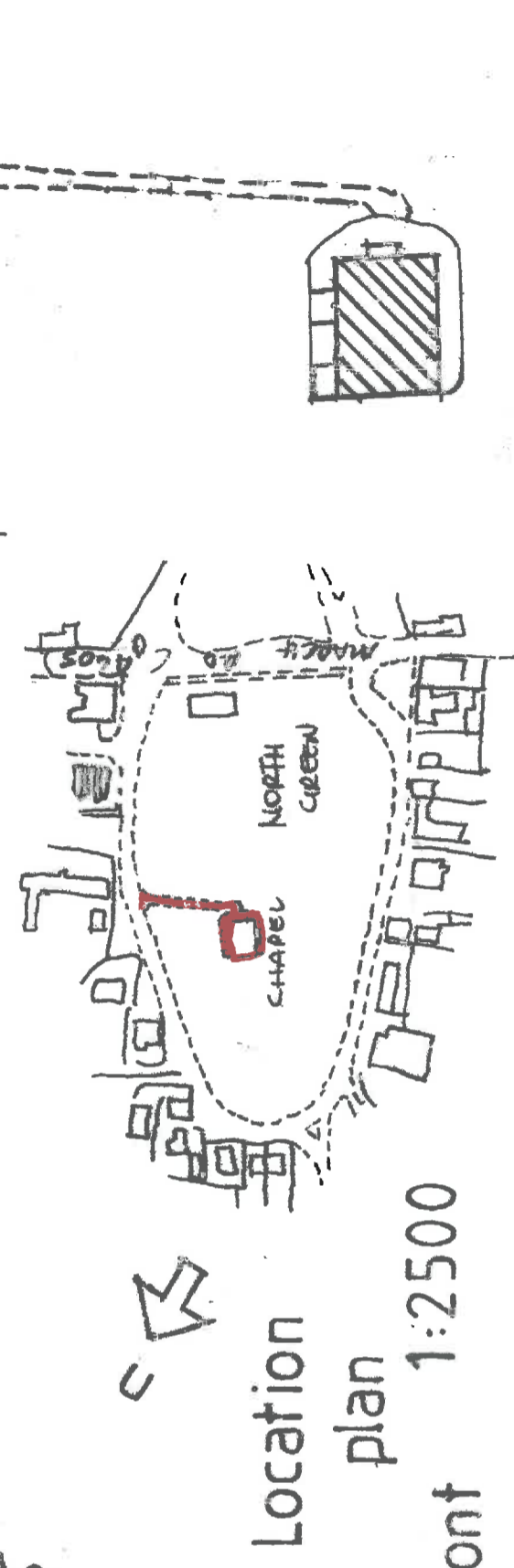
Existing floor plan 1:100



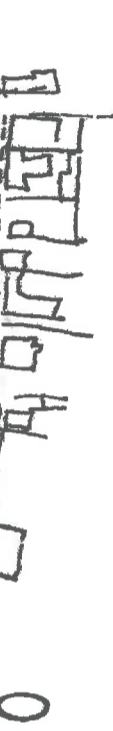
Existing section on A-A 1:100



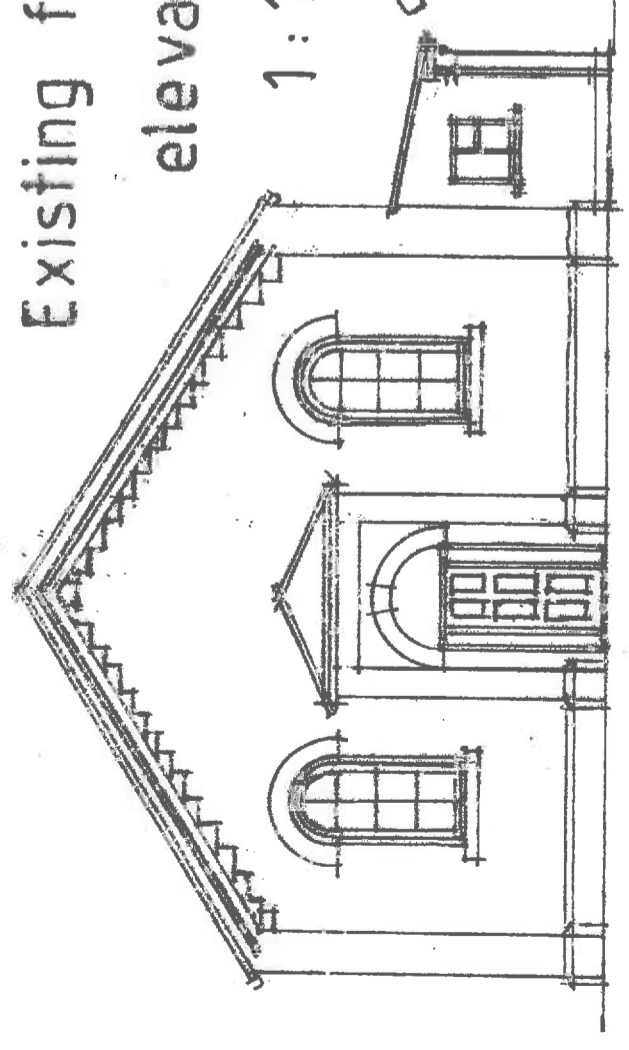
Block plan 1:500



Location plan 1:2500



Existing front elevation 1:100 (NO CHANGE)



PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER CHAPEL AT NORTH GREEN, COATES PETERBOROUGH. HODSONS, CHARTERED SURVEYORS, WHITTLESEY. PLAN. NO 7860 1 OF 2