

## Unrestricted Report

### ITEM NO: 08

Application No.  
**21/00340/FUL**

Ward:  
Winkfield And  
Cranbourne

Date Registered:  
20 April 2021

Target Decision Date:  
15 June 2021

Site Address:

**The Methodist Church Winkfield Row Bracknell  
Berkshire RG42 6NE**

Proposal:

**Conversion and change of use of vacant church (F1 use) to a 1 bed dwelling (C3 use) with associated alterations.**

Applicant:

S and J Homes

Agent:

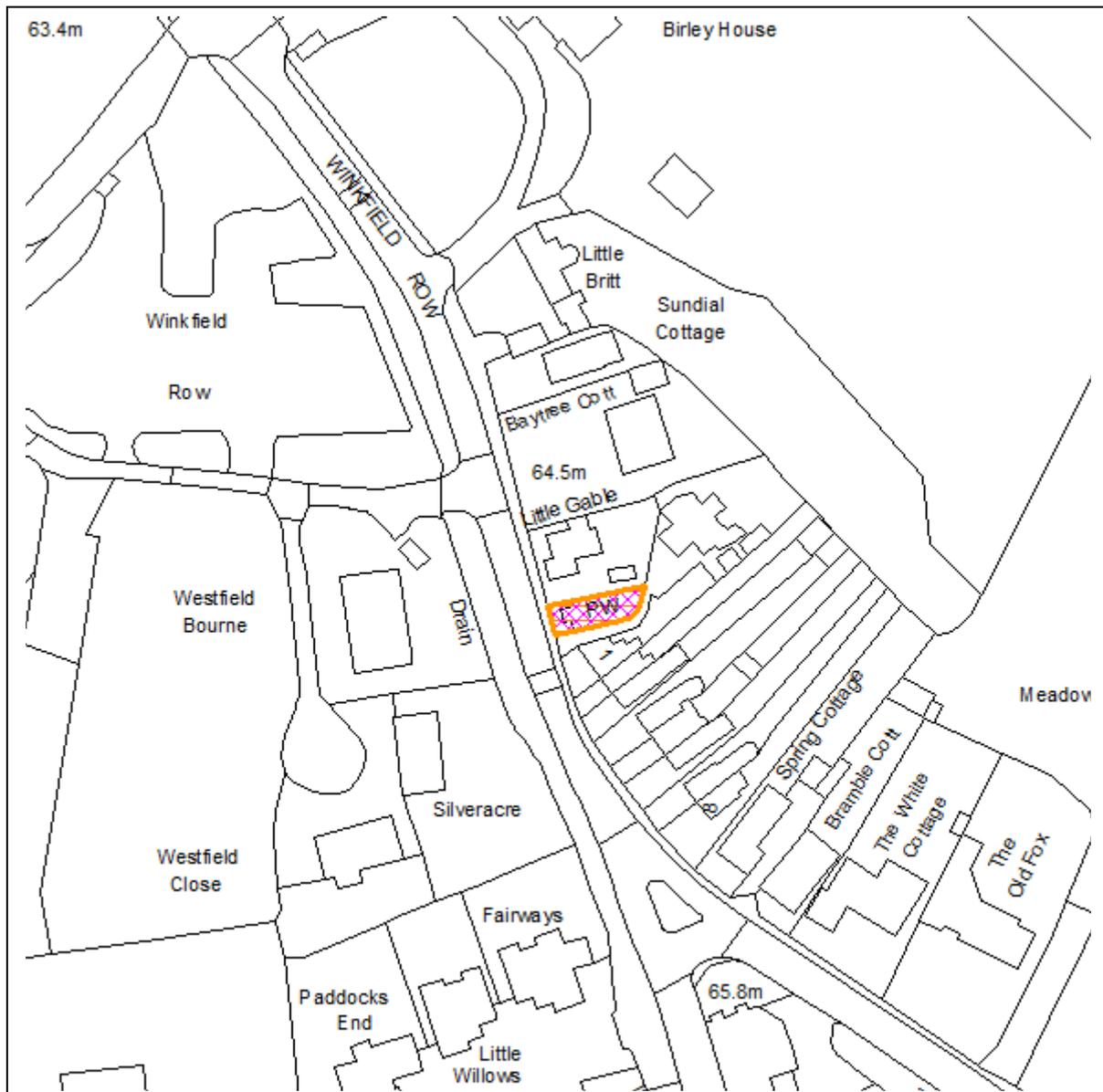
Mr Donncha Murphy

Case Officer:

Olivia Jones, 01344 352000

[Development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

### Site Location Plan (for identification purposes only, not to scale)



## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of an existing church (F1 use) to a one-bedroom dwelling (C3 use).
- 1.2 The development relates to a site within the settlement boundary. It is not considered that the development results in an adverse impact on the streetscene or the character and appearance of the area (which is a Conservation Area), residential amenity or highway safety. The loss of a community asset has been satisfactorily justified.

RECOMMENDATION
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Planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in Section 11 of this report
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## 2. REASONS FOR REPORTING THE APPLICATION TO ADVISORY PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The application is being considered by the Advisory Planning Committee at the requests of Councillors Virgo and Ms Gaw as the proposal does not adhere to parking standards in an already congested area.

## 3. PLANNING STATUS AND SITE DESCRIPTION

PLANNING STATUS
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Within Defined Settlement
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Winkfield Row Conservation Area
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Northern Villages Study Area within Character Area Assessments SPD
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More than 5km from Thames Basin Heath SPA
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- 3.1 The Methodist Church is a detached building that is accessed from Winkfield Row. The application site does not benefit from any off-street parking.

## 4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 The relevant planning history is summarised as follows:

20/00297/FUL

Change of use from chapel (D1) to storage (B8).

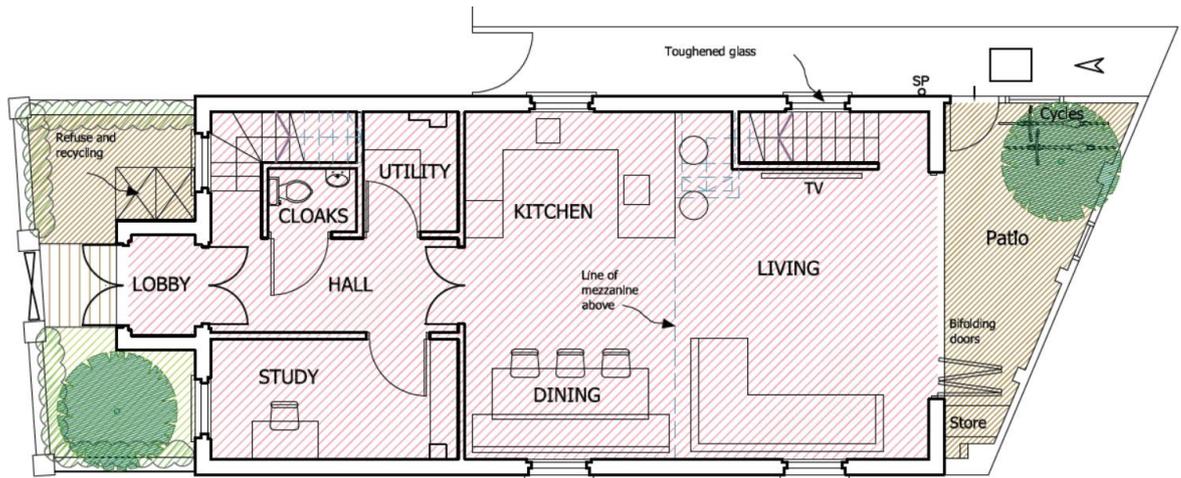
Refused 2020

## 5. THE PROPOSAL

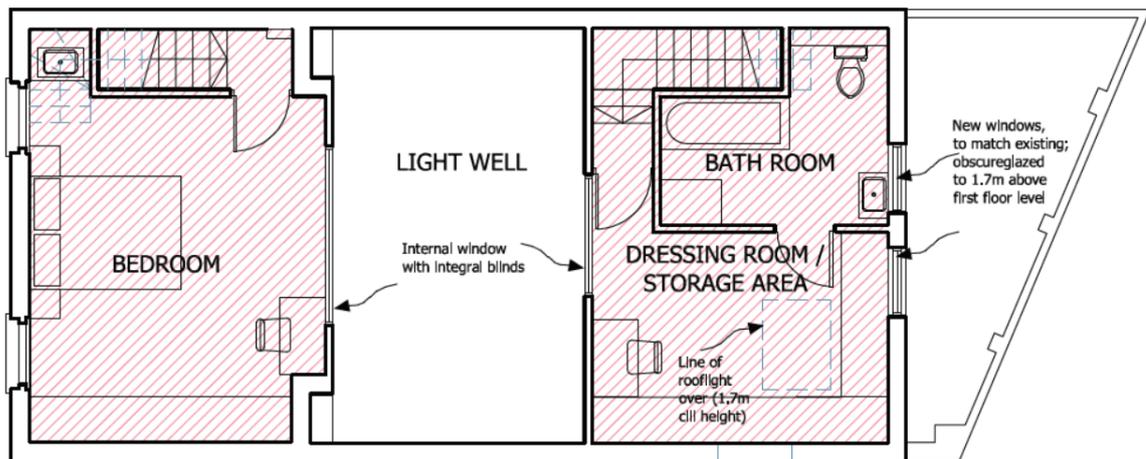
- 5.1 The proposal is for the conversion of an existing vacant church into a one-bedroom dwelling. A courtyard to the rear would provide outdoor amenity space, and bicycle storage. Bin storage would be located to the front of the property, with landscaping proposed along the frontage.

The following physical amendments are proposed to the building:

- Removal of roof on single storey rear projection to provide walled patio
- Installation of 2no. first floor rear windows
- Installation of first floor side (south) facing rooflight



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

## 6. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

### Winkfield Parish Council

6.1 Objection on the following grounds:

- (i) Insufficient parking provision

### Other Representations

6.2 Four letters of objection have been received raising the following concerns:

- (i) Lack of parking
- (ii) Overlooking concerns
- (iii) Bin storage out of keeping with character of conservation area
- (iv) Ownership concerns

[Officer Comment: Concerns regarding ownership and other legal issues (including rights of way) are not material planning considerations.]

6.3 One letter of representation was made which supported the reuse of a vacant building and that a dwelling would have less demand for parking and generate less noise than a community space but they did raise concerns regarding the size of the outdoor areas.

[Officer Comment: Since this comment was submitted the scheme was reduced from two bedrooms to one bedroom.]

## 7. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Highway Authority

7.1 The Highway Authority does not support the application as the parking standards cannot be met, but they have not made a recommendation that the application be refused.

### Heritage Officer

7.2 No objection

## 8. MAIN POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

8.1 The key policies and associated guidance applying to the site are:

	Development Plan	NPPF
General policies	CS1 & CS2 of CSDPD	Consistent
Loss of community asset	Saved policy SC3 of BFBLP Draft policy LP32 in the Pre-Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFBLP) (2021)	Consistent
Design and Character (including Heritage)	CS7 of CSDPD, Saved policy EN20 of BFBLP	Consistent
Residential Amenity	Saved policies EN1, EN2, EN20 and EN25 of BFBLP	Consistent
Highways	CS23 of CSDPD, Saved policy M9 of BFBLP	Consistent
<b>Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)</b>		
Design (2017) Parking Standards (2016) Streetscene (2010)		
<b>Other publications</b>		
National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Building Research Establishment: Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: a Guide to Good Practice 2011 (BRE SLPDS) CIL Charging Schedule (2015)		

## 9. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 The key issues for consideration are:

- (i) Principle of the Development

- (ii) Loss of community asset
- (iii) Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- (iv) Impact on residential amenity
- (v) Highway safety consideration
- (vi) Impact on biodiversity
- (vii) Sustainability
- (viii) Thames Basin Heath SPA
- (ix) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

**i. Principle of Development**

9.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, which is supported by the NPPF (paras. 2 and 12). Policy CS2 of the CSDPD states that development will be permitted within defined settlements, provided that the development is consistent with the character, accessibility and provision of infrastructure and services within that settlement. The above policy is considered to be consistent with the NPPF, and as a consequence is considered to carry significant weight.

9.3 The site is located in a residential area that is within a defined settlement on the Bracknell Forest Borough Policies Map (2013). As a result, the proposed change of use is considered acceptable in principle, subject to no adverse impact on the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers, highway safety and upon the character and appearance of the area, etc.

**ii. Loss of a Community Asset**

9.4 The proposal would result in the loss of the existing community use (within Class F1 in the Use Classes Order) of the church. There are planning policies at both local and national level which seek to protect community facilities and services. The retention of a building in F1 use provides the opportunity for local community members to gather, whether or not the building is retained as a church or used in a different capacity for community facilities and services.

9.5 Section 8 of the NPPF refers to promoting healthy and safe communities. Para 93 states: To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should...

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as [...] places of worship);
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community;

9.6 'Saved' Policy SC3 of the BFBLP states that development will not be acceptable which results in the reduction of existing community facilities. The commentary associated with this policy includes places of worship as forming part of the social infrastructure of a community.

9.7 Emerging policy in the Pre-Submission Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFBLP) (2021) includes draft Policy LP32 Protection of community facilities and service. The supporting text states that community facilities include places of worship.

9.8 Draft Policy LP32 of the BFBLP is at pre-submission Regulation 19 stage and has yet to go through formal examination, it therefore carries limited weight in decision making. However, this policy provides an indication of the evidence necessary to justify the loss of a community facility.

- 9.9 The application has provided the following justification for the change of use:
- Sufficient church provision already exists in the locality, as evidenced by the church not being used since April 2018 and a number of alternative Methodist churches being available in the wider area;
  - Marketing information has been provided showing that the building has been on the re-sale market since January 2020 with no offers for F1 use
- 9.10 The marketing information has been reviewed by the Council's Assistant Director: Property Services. It is their conclusion that the marketing process was reasonable and suggested that a community use may not be practical in this location given the lack of parking.
- 9.11 It is therefore considered that sufficient evidence has been provided to satisfy the requirements of Draft Policy LP32 of the BFBLP pre-submission plan. As such, the loss of the community facility would be acceptable subject to no adverse impact on the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers, highway safety and upon the character and appearance of the area.

### **iii. Impact on Character and Appearance of Surrounding Area**

- 9.12 'Saved' policy EN20 of the BFBLP states that development should be in sympathy with the appearance and character of the local environment and appropriate in scale, mass, design, materials etc. Policy CS7 of the CSDPD states that the Council would require high quality design for all development in Bracknell Forest. Development proposals would be permitted which build on the urban local character, respecting local patterns of development. Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design as key to making places better for people to live. Additionally, the NPPF states that the design of development should help improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.
- 9.13 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Recent case law has established that under section 70(3) the general power to grant planning permission under section 70(1) is expressly subject to section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72(1) provides that a local planning authority has a statutory duty that: 'with respect of any building or other land in a conservation area.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.' Paragraph 203 of the NPPF states: '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 directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'
- 9.14 The Methodist Chapel within Winkfield Row Conservation Area contributes to the overall character and appearance of the area and is considered to be a building of townscape merit within the area and a non-designated heritage asset within the terms of the NPPF paragraph 203.
- 9.15 The unlisted chapel is currently unused and therefore requires a new function. It is a historic building of townscape merit within the Conservation Area. It is located in a residential area and therefore its re-use as a residential building would seem the most appropriate use compatible with the form and location of the building.
- 9.16 The proposed changes externally to the building are minimal being confined primarily to the rear. Therefore, the impact of the proposals on the appearance of the Chapel and the

character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be minimal. There would be some loss of historic fabric to the rear of the Chapel from insertion of new doors and windows. However, the re-use of the building in a function compatible with its long-term conservation would help to preserve the building and avoid any issues from deterioration of the structure.

- 9.17 Due to the constraints of the site, the bins would need to be stored to the front of the property. It is not uncommon to find bins stored to the front of properties within the streetscene, and historic photographs of the church show bins to the front.
- 9.18 The application includes proposed landscaping to the front, including hedging between the proposed bin storage area and the highway. It is considered that a suitable landscaping scheme would reduce the visibility of the bin storage and improve the appearance of the frontage of the property. This scheme would be required by pre-commencement condition.
- 9.19 As such, subject to a suitable soft landscaping scheme the proposed access is not considered to have a significant adverse impact on the character of the area and would be in accordance with 'Saved' policy EN20 of the BFBLP, Policy CS7 of CSDPD, Design SPD and the NPPF.

#### **iv. Residential Amenity**

- 9.20 'Saved' policy EN20 of the BFBLP states that development will not adversely affect the amenity of surrounding properties and adjoining area. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that the Local Planning Authority should ensure high quality amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
- 9.21 The proposal would result in the provision of a dwelling rather than an existing church. The provision of one additional dwelling is not considered to have a significant impact on residential amenity given the existing residential nature of the surrounding area.
- 9.22 The rear elevation of the application site faces onto the driveway of 'The Bungalow' and the rear garden of 1 Winkfield Row. The rear windows would be sited approximately 3 metres from the rear garden of 1 Winkfield Row, and therefore it is considered that any upper storey rear windows would result in unacceptable levels of overlooking. Therefore, the first floor rear windows should be restricted by condition to be obscure-glazed and top-opening.
- 9.23 In addition, due to the angle of the application site in relation to the garden of 1 Winkfield Row, it is considered that the upper storey side windows should also be restricted to avoid adverse overlooking.
- 9.24 The proposed development would not increase the built form of the building, and as such it is not considered to appear unduly overbearing or result in unacceptable levels of overshadowing.
- 9.25 A walled patio is proposed to the rear to provide outside amenity space for the future occupants. This patio has an area of approximately 9.8 square metres and is located to the north-east of the proposed dwelling. The Design SPD recommends that all gardens should be able to accommodate activities such as playing, drying clothes, cycle and waste storage. Furthermore, all gardens should receive direct sunlight for at least part of the day at all times of the year.
- 9.26 It is acknowledged that the outside space is very small, and due to its position is likely to only receive direct sunlight in the morning. However, it is considered that sufficient outdoor space has been provided for a one bedroom dwelling that it would be unreasonable to refuse the application on this ground alone.

9.27 As such, the proposal would not be considered to affect the residential amenities of residents of neighbouring properties or future occupiers of the property and would be in accordance with 'Saved' policies EN20 & EN25 of the BFBLP, the Design SPD and the NPPF.

#### **v. Transport and Highways Considerations**

9.28 Policy CS23 of the CSDPD states that the Council will use its planning and transport powers to reduce the need to travel, increase the safety of travel, promote alternative modes of travel and promote travel planning. 'Saved' policy M9 of the BFBLP states that development will not be permitted unless satisfactory parking provision is made for vehicles and cycles.

9.29 The Parking Standards SPD recommends that a 1 bedroom property requires 1 off-street parking space. No off-street parking has been provided with the proposed development.

9.30 The application has provided TRICS data which shows that a church is likely on average to have demand for 1 car parking space each weekday, with up to 3 cars at the weekend. The weekday demand would be comparable to the parking requirements for the proposed 1 bedroom dwelling. Furthermore, the building could be used for any community use without the requirement for planning permission, which could result in greater demand for parking than a 1 bedroom dwelling. The following uses all fall under the F1 use class:

- (a) For the provision of education (e.g. schools)
- (b) Art gallery
- (c) Museum
- (d) Library
- (e) Public hall
- (f) Law court

9.31 The Parking Standards would require 3 parking spaces for a library (1 space per 30 sq.m.), and at least 2 parking spaces for a school (1 space per member of staff, 1 space per 15/30 pupils). Both these uses have a greater parking demand than the proposed one-bedroom dwelling. [The remaining uses listed have no specific parking standards, and are considered on a case-by-case basis.]

9.32 Furthermore, the building is currently vacant, and it would be desirable to bring the building back into use, to avoid it falling into disrepair to the detriment of the character of the area (which is a Conservation Area). Any re-use of the building is likely to create parking demand, and the provision of a 1-bedroom dwelling is likely to create less parking demand than many other uses.

9.33 Given the fall-back position of what use could be carried out on the site without the need for planning permission, and the desirability of bringing the (currently vacant) building back into use, and the provision of an additional dwelling to the Borough's housing supply, it would not be considered reasonable to refuse the application on the basis of a shortfall of one parking space against the standard set out in the Council's SPD.

9.34 In order to ensure that the dwelling is restricted to one bedroom only, it is recommended the number of bedrooms is restricted by condition.

9.35 Subject to the above condition, it is considered that the proposed use would not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety over and above the parking demand for the existing use or any other use falling within the same F1 use class.

#### **vi. Sustainability Considerations**

9.36 The CSDPD policies CS10 and CS12 require a sustainability statement and energy demand assessment where new buildings are proposed. The proposal would result in the conversion of an existing building, and therefore neither a sustainability statement nor an energy demand assessment are required.

**vii. Thames Basin Heath SPA**

9.37 The proposed development is located more than 5km from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. As such, it is not considered that the provision of an additional dwelling would adversely affect the SPA, and therefore mitigation is not required.

**viii. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

9.38 Following the introduction on the 6th April 2015 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), all applications for planning permission will be assessed as to whether they are liable. As this development would not result in a net increase in floor space it is not CIL liable.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

10.1 It is considered that the development is acceptable in principle and does not result in an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area (which is a Conservation Area), highway safety or the residential amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties or future occupiers of the property. The loss of the community asset has been satisfactorily justified. It is therefore considered that the development complies with 'Saved' policies of the BFBLP, Policies of the CSDPD, BFBC SPDs and the NPPF.

## **11. RECOMMENDATION**

11.1 That the Assistant Director: Planning be recommended to **APPROVE** application 21/00340/FUL subject to the following conditions amended, added to or deleted as the Assistant Director: Planning considers necessary:

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

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following approved plans and other submitted details:

Location Plan (01) – Received 24.04.21

Proposed Elevations and Sections (03) – Received 24.04.21

Proposed Floor Plans (04 Rev B) – Received 24.08.21

Proposed Elevations and Sections (05) – Received 24.04.21

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.

03. The following, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the relevant part of the work is begun:

a) Plan and elevation drawings, with materials annotated, of all new windows at a minimum scale of 1:10;

b) Plan and elevation drawings, with materials annotated, of all new doors at a minimum scale of 1:10;

c) Manufacturers details of the type of rooflights. Rooflights are to be conservation type, fitted flush with or below the roof covering.  
The works shall be implemented as approved.  
REASON: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy.

04. All new works, and works of making good to the retained fabric, whether internal or external shall be finished to match existing, original or adjacent work with regard to the methods used and to materials, colours, textures and profiles.  
REASON: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the building in accordance with the requirements of policy.

05. Notwithstanding what is shown on the approved plans: the first floor rear windows on the development hereby permitted shall not be glazed at any time other than with a minimum of Pilkington Level 3 obscure glass (or equivalent) unless the parts of the window which are clear glazed are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed. They shall at all times be non-opening unless the parts of the window which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed.  
REASON: To prevent the overlooking of neighbouring properties.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN20]

06. No part of the first floor side facing rooflight of the development hereby permitted shall be positioned lower than 1.7 metres above the finished floor of the room in which the rooflight is installed.  
REASON: To prevent the overlooking of neighbouring properties.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN20]

07. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no additional windows, similar openings or enlargement thereof shall be constructed at first floor level or above on the side or rear elevations of the development hereby permitted except for any which may be shown on the approved drawing(s), unless they are glazed with a minimum of Pilkington Level 3 obscure glass (or equivalent) or the parts of the window, opening or enlargement which are clear glazed are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed.  
REASON: To prevent the overlooking of neighbouring properties.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP EN20]

08. At no time shall the accommodation provided in the dwelling hereby approved be altered so that the dwelling shall comprise more than 1 bedroom.  
REASON: To prevent an over-development of the site and to avoid additional parking pressures.  
[Relevant Policies: BFBLP M9]

09. The development shall not be begun until a scheme depicting hard and soft landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a 3 year post planting maintenance schedule. All hard landscaping works and all planting comprised in the soft landscaping works shall be carried out and completed in full accordance with the approved scheme, in the nearest planting season (1st October to 31st March inclusive) to the completion of the development or prior to the parking spaces being brought into use, whichever is sooner. As a minimum, the quality of all hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with British Standard 4428:1989 'Code Of practice For General Landscape Operations' or any subsequent revision. All trees and other plants included within the approved details shall

be healthy, well-formed specimens of a minimum quality that is compatible with British Standard 3936:1992 (Part 1) 'Specifications For Trees & Shrubs' and British Standard 4043 (where applicable) or any subsequent revision. Any trees or other plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, die, are removed, uprooted, are significantly damaged, become diseased or deformed, shall be replaced during the nearest planting season (1st October to 31st March inclusive) with others of the same size, species and quality as approved.

REASON: In the interests of good landscape design and the visual amenity of the area. [Core Strategy DPD CS7, BFBLP 'Saved' Policies EN2 and EN20]

Informative(s):

01. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.
02. Although they must be complied with, no details are required to be submitted in relation to the following conditions:
  - (1) Commencement
  - (2) Approved plans
  - (4) Make good
  - (5) Rear windows
  - (6) Rooflight
  - (7) Future windows
  - (8) One bedroom only

The applicant is advised that the following conditions require discharging at specific stages:

  - (3) Materials – to be discharged before the relevant part of the works referred in the condition begin
  - (9) Landscaping – to be discharged prior to the commencement of development
03. The applicant should note that this permission does not convey any authorisation to enter onto land or to carry out works on land not within the applicant's ownership.
04. This is a planning permission. Before beginning any development you may also need separate permission(s) under Building Regulations or other legislation. It is your responsibility to check that there are no covenants or other restrictions that apply to your property.